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# AMAZING STORIES

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**"I PAINT FROM DEATH!"**

By ROBERT FLEMING FITZPATRICK

UNDER THE SPELL OF HIS BRUSH, THE DEAD LIVED AGAIN

VOLUME 23  
NUMBER 8

AMAZING STORIES

AUGUST  
1949

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AGENTS—SUTAN

The

# OBSERVATORY

by the Editor

**A**IR FORCE Reports Flying Saucers "No Joke." That's one of the headlines in today's paper. Also, the *Saturday Evening Post* is running a two-part featured article entitled "What Can We Believe About Flying Saucers?" Well, how about it? Are they real? Yes, is now the answer. When we said they were, everybody laughed. Okay, now that they are real, what are they? We suggested that too, and they are still laughing. But let's back-track and admit we were wrong. They aren't from Mars. Nor are they from Moscow. Nor from Antarctica. Nor from Oak Ridge. Nor from Timbucktoo. The answer to what they are doesn't give us any answer to where they are from—because we simply say they are mechanical, and that they both carry and do not carry passengers. In other words, all are gadgets of varying sizes, but not all of them carry a "crew". Some of them carry just instruments.

**W**HAT KIND of instruments? Okay, let's list the simple ones and then keep our mouth shut about the ones we can't understand. They have cameras, television, radio, radar, anti-gravity beams, and telepathic communication. Far enough? Amazing enough? We'll stop there. Apparently there are more gadgets far beyond this editor's poor comprehension.

**N**OW, IF they've got all this, are they from Moscow? Or from Mars? Mars? We say no, because we say interplanetary travel is impossible. Yes, *Amazing Stories* has published many interplanetary stories, and very popular they are, but they are fictional romances, and we never said they were more. We had hoped they might be possible forecasts of the future, but then, we didn't know the facts about outer space, beyond our atmosphere. We pictured it all wrong, largely because we believed the scientists knew what they were talking about, concerning it being a vacuum and almost the cold of absolute zero. We believed that, and we got fooled.

**N**OW WE FIND out that space is hot. Terribly hot. So hot that at 250 miles up, the Wac Corporal rocket shot up to that height didn't come down—because it vaporized in the tremendous heat. The experimenters who sent it up don't know that.

All they know is that it seemed to vanish from radar contact at the peak of its flight, and so far, has not been found, nor the place where it landed—in spite of the fact that they never before lost a rocket.

**O**H, THEY DO know that at 70 or 80 miles up, the heat is 800 degrees. And that at 100 miles, or more, it goes to 1800. Metals of some kinds, like copper, brass, etc, melt at those temperatures. Now they suspect that it may be as high as 30,000 degrees higher up. They can't really find out, because their instruments don't come down. You can't read a vaporized thermocouple.

**I**T'S REALLY nice to have your science fiction ideas substantiated. And that flying saucers are real, and no joke. It's nice, too, to know that after all, scientists aren't demigods, but just people like we are, and that some of our ideas are as much on the beam as their's.

**S**O LET'S MAKE a prediction about flying saucers? Or should we? Because even our science fiction readers might mumble in their beards about "impossibilities"... But let's do it anyway. Nobody could prove it, except the saucers themselves—and we think they will!

**W**E THINK the saucers come from another dimension. That this other dimension is located on this planet, and that further, it surrounds our planet like a huge "sphere". When we say "dimension", we don't mean a place with more than three dimensions, length, width and thickness. We mean just another world like ours, occupying the same space, except that it is larger. There you are—and you may laugh as you please, because you'll quote the scientists who keep on saying "two things can't exist in the same space at the same time."

**T**HEY CAN'T? How do we know? Two things of the same nature, perhaps, but what if they aren't two things of the same physical nature? What if they are a different nature? And what is time, anyway? What if they exist in a different "time". No, not in the future, nor in the far past. But just in a different "place" in time, like a different place in this very minute? Remember, the flying saucers are real. So, they exist! —Rap

# AMAZING STORIES

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cover painting by Arnold Kohn, illustrating a scene from "I Paint From Death"

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Slowly Lao Tzia's arm lifted, disturbing the dust of uncounted centuries.



# The AWAKENING

By Rog Phillips

Lao Tzin lived 50,000 years ago, yet he was also alive today! He had become an involuntary immortal—only to find his civilization dead! It was a sad blow.

A faint sound disturbed the utterly still, motionless air. The cavern darkness, a compound of total absence of light and an intense aura of loneliness, impregnated even the molecules of the granite walls, pressing the inch thick layer of fine, undisturbed dust compactly against the stone floor.

Infra-red vision might have revealed the details of this place,—a crypt of generous size with ten foot ceiling, utterly bare unbroken walls, a room completely devoid of any distinguishing feature with the exception of the casket-like container in the geometric center of the floor.

The faint sound was repeated more loudly. It was the sigh of escaping breath, long held. It was the protest of unused muscles. It was the awakening of consciousness where consciousness had slept, while centuries piled dust, atom by slow atom, to form a shroud over the protective box that contained—Lao Tzin.

He lay there unmoving except for

the slow blinking of slitted eyes and the slight rhythmic movement of his chest as cleaned, freshened air drifted in and out of long unused lungs to supply needed oxygen for the increasing metabolism of his awakened body.

To his mind the awakening was no more than the bringing into consciousness of the physical vehicle—an expanding of the conscious mind to include that for which it had had no need for fifty thousand years.

The sigh escaped his lips again at the contemplation of what might lie ahead before he had done what must be done. Almost, a hand reached out to a jewel stud. It drew back in resignation. *That* way lay death in another few centuries as the radioactive powerhouse underneath gradually ceased to operate the devices which provided a never ending source of nourishment and sterile air that were necessary for continued existence.

Instead, the hand reached in a different direction and pressed a differ-

ent stud which brought light from an undetermined source to bathe the interior of the box.

It revealed a figure, white of skin, legs long and straight, with high intellectual forehead crowned by gleaming black hair which dropped, or rather, trailed into a small tube attached to a frame. This tube kept the hair trimmed.

The beardless face was raceless, yet showing hints of every race known to mankind. The eyes alone would have caused anyone to look a second time if Lao Tzin were to appear in a crowd in conventional dress. They were a bottomless, rich brown, incredibly wide, with olive tinted lids that hinted barely at an oriental slant.

Lao Tzin rested in a cushioned frame which had shifted regularly to provide a movement without which his body would have long ago stiffened into inflexible rigidity regardless of the nourishment which preserved life and health. The frame was still. The alarm mechanism that had awakened him had also changed the mechanical routine of the chamber to accomodate and assist him in the task of regaining the use of his physical functions, which had remained unused for so many thousands of years.

To be sure, they HAD been used; but in a purely reflex manner not connected with consciousness. Just as some people can sleep through all sorts of disturbances and be wakened by the slight click of the alarm before it begins to sound on the bedside clock, or can walk in their sleep and return to bed without waking, so Lao Tzin's body had been fed, bathed, exercised, and otherwise kept in perfect condition by clockwork commands that did not require conscious interpretation.

He explored his body mentally, feeling and ranging through it, flex-

ing muscles, discovering again the neural channels that tied him to his flesh. Finally he knew that he could rise and in a few steps regain the skill that had been his before, when he laid down in this place.

Idly he wondered what the outside world would be like now. His lips formed a smile. It would be fun to find out how the world had changed. Undoubtedly, assuming the human race still survived, its history would hardly go back to the era when he had left it. It never did. Catastrophic wars, the pendulum of savagery and civilization, wiped out records and distorted them into myths that living generations prided themselves on disbelieving.

No matter. He had no desire to satisfy a non-existent ego by establishing himself as an immortal in the eyes of the pack.

GENTLE mechanical hands began the preparation of his skin for his return to the outer world. Mechanical eyes guided them while sterile water and chemicals were fed through hidden tubeways within the arms of the mechanism.

Lao Tzin closed his eyes and let his mind wander back over the fifty thousand years of consciousness he had just completed, undisturbed by the ties of the flesh. It came to rest in the days of his last sojourn into the world.

The outer chamber of his resting place appeared in his mind. In recollection he found the secret door and opened it, following the hidden tunnel to the surface. He surveyed the surrounding countryside and its inhabitants as they had been five hundred centuries before. In those centuries the tides of humanity would have moved in and out as the wavelets on a serene lake move against the shore in the space of an hour. Of only



one thing could he be sure: things would not be as they were then.

He let memory bring back the last time he had risen from his sleeping place to go out into the world. He recalled the adventures he had had while orienting himself and attaining his objective of replenishing his atomic power source, using men whose lives would soon end anyway to do the work which was so fatal in so short a time.

A momentary dread assailed him. Perhaps there were no more men! Perhaps the human race had become extinct!

He closed his eyes and sent out his thoughts, probing. Shortly he opened them again, satisfied. There were men. Their thoughts were strange and foreign but they were intelligent.

The mechanical ministrations ended. There was nothing more that needed doing before he could lift the lid and stand up.

His fingers reached toward another jewel stud. They hovered over it as a man pauses before an icy plunge, then with a sudden movement pushed it in. Rods rose from hidden recesses and touched the lid softly, lifting its hundreds of pounds of marble mass far enough to enable him to rise. He waited while the air restoring mechanism sent out fresh drafts and drew in the stale air of the chamber.

Then finally he rose and stepped out. His naked body was perfectly proportioned. Only his eyes revealed the ancient wisdom and the maturity of the soul within.

He looked down at his feet, digging a toe into the packed dust until it touched the stone surface underneath. The light from the sarcophagus was enough to reveal details in sharp outline to Lao Tzin. He searched out the block of stone in the wall that would move aside to allow him to leave this place.

Bending down he reached into the box and pressed another stud which started the machinery which dropped that stone into the floor. At once a draft sped by him from the box toward the dark opening yawning on the other side.

He nodded his head in satisfaction. The tunnel had not been blocked. He had not expected it to be. He had roamed the world over before selecting this spot. He had explored the geological formations underneath to make sure there would be no shift, ever. He had located the entrance to this place from the outside in a place where no erosion could cut it away and no accumulation of debris could fill it over. He had been careful in every minute detail, knowing that during fifty thousand years even the most substantial and permanent of things can often behave as if they were fluid.

The way was now open. All he had to do was depart. He hesitated, overcoming the desire to remain, to creep back into his resting place and return to the world of dreams and mental universes he had had to forsake for a brief time in order to ensure their continuance later.

Then one foot groped forward. The other followed. Lao Tzin entered the dark tunnel. He paused at a ruby stud set in the wall and pushed it gently. Behind him the cover of the box started to drop. The stone block began to rise to its former position.

Darkness came again to the ancient crypt. Only a series of footsteps leading from the box in the geometric center of the floor to a blank face of the wall remained to show that anything changed over the ages.

**THE FLOOR** of the valley was a hundred feet lower than it had been when last Lao Tzin had seen it. To compensate for that, the soil and

rocks piled at the base of the cliff reached slightly above the old level. Memory superimposed the old contours over the new. A broad river had washed through here sometime in the past few thousand years for it to change so much. It had been a long time ago, though, because now the valley was dotted with clumps of trees. Some were oaks. The vegetation in general spoke of centuries of stable growth with deep topsoil.

Familiar contours and details stabbed with painful sweetness into Lao Tzin's heart. He hadn't realized down below how glad he would be to see the outside world once more.

The sun was out of sight to the west. The opening where he stood faced east. From the length of shadows it had to be late afternoon. Most of the valley was divided into squared patches of different colors, implying cultivated fields with assorted crops.

Here and there a group of buildings gave evidence of a high stage of architectural development along utility lines. Gleaming black ribbons showed proof not only of a mechanical age, but also of the discovery of petroleum. Now a strangely monstrous, to Lao Tzin, automobile came into sight. Some freak of atmospheric conditions brought its sound clearly to him at the height where he stood, though the car was nearly two miles away.

He listened analytically. His eyes meanwhile watched the progress of the car, estimating its speed. From the fabulous storehouse of memory he typed the civilization and its degree of development from its mathematical philosophies to its factory methods.

A second and a third car came into sight. He watched, comparing differences and similarities in style. The three automobiles came within a half a mile of his perch in the face of the cliff before the highway turned away

to the south.

Standardization, patent law, democracy as the current form of government, free enterprise,—even airplanes, were deduced from this study.

Lao Tzin smiled to himself. It was the smile of one who has found an old familiar book by chance. Perhaps living might be interesting. Each such civilization had taught him one or two things entirely new to him. Perhaps this one would be no exception.

He knew what he would find, roughly;—a society topheavy with material science and industry in a continual state of flux, with myriad philosophies and religions based on imperfect logic and arbitrary standards. Perhaps an abolition of slavery. Less likely a political equality of sexes.

Unconsciously Lao Tzin was bringing to his mind's eye the civilization of Lemuria when it reached the stage of asphalt roads and internal combustion engines, and, more remotely, that of Tzimbo-ah-ah a hundred and seventy thousand years before Lemuria, in the lands that later became the south polar region when Hangoapahbesoyleyutfal and his mad followers had shifted the axis of rotation of the Earth.

There were others before that, stretching back and back, following the same pattern of development with only unimportant variations.

**S**UDDENLY Lao Tzin was lonely. His eyes surveyed the terrain below to make sure there was no one watching, or close enough to see. Then he retreated a way into the tunnel and pressed another jewel stud which caused a small block to slip out of the wall even with his chest.

He hand reached in and pulled out a coiled, woven metal rope. One end

was fastened inside the recess. He jerked the rope to make sure it was secure, then trailed it back to the cliff where he dropped it and watched it fall, uncoiling as it went.

Lowering himself over the edge he slid down hand over hand, careful not to slip and start a momentum which would burn his skin to stop.

His muscles worked in smooth rhythm under his flawless bleached skin. Either arm could support the full weight of his body easily even though it was not excessively muscled.

Half an hour later he crouched concealed in some bushes at the edge of the highway. A small sign a few feet away carried the meaningless, to him, symbols, U.S. 12.

He glanced at those symbols with amused interest. Their simplicity bespoke an alphabet rather than an ideogram writing. That meant that learning to read would be simple. The written and spoken languages would be identical except for idiomatic variations and usages.

A car came into sight. There was only one person in it. A man. From the width of his shoulders he seemed about Lao Tzin's size.

The brown depths of his eyes became alive with a swirling energy. An aura of power seemed to leave those eyes and dart forward.

The man in the car braked to a screeching stop at the side of the road, his hair standing on end. Something was happening to him!

Lao Tzin heard the words, "What the hell's come over me?" The sound of the motor stopped. The door of the car opened. As the occupant stepped out Lao Tzin stepped into sight from the concealment of the bushes.

His manner was changed from the smooth, effortless poise with which he had hidden in those bushes. He stag-

gered weakly, a dazed expression on his face. His eyelids dropped, concealing the strangeness of his eyes.

"My God! What happened to you, fella?" the man exclaimed as his eyes fell on Lao Tzin's naked, tottering form.

Through veiled eyes Lao Tzin quickly studied the look of bewildered concern on the other's face and relaxed in the knowledge that no threat would come from him. He moaned softly, placing his hands to his head.

The other rushed forward and supported him, guiding him to the car.

"Sit here on the running board while I get some clothes for you out of my bag," he ordered. He accompanied his meaningless request with assisting motions which enabled Lao Tzin to guess what he had said.

TEN MINUTES later Lao Tzin was completely dressed in everything except shoes which had proven a little too small. The good samaritan had chatted continually. Little by little Lao Tzin was getting the "feel" of the language. His knowledge of hundreds of tongues from all past periods of history stood him in good stead in reducing the rapid fire sequences into orderly elements.

When clumsy but kindly hands fitted the second sock onto Lao Tzin's foot the man stepped back, viewing his handiwork with self satisfaction.

Lao Tzin dared to look at him, being careful to keep the dazed expression of pain on his face. He allowed a pale smile of gratitude to show in thanks.

"I'm Jerry Goodman," the man said heartily, extending his hand.

Lao Tzin sensed a crucial moment. The extended hand he understood. The words he surmised to be the man's name. Keeping his air of bewilderment he feigned a sudden

spasm of pain.

Immediately Jerry Goodman's eyes filled with pity and self reproach.

"Dammed for a fool," he said, helping Lao Tzin into the front seat of the car. "You may be dying right this minute and I stand around talking about the weather."

He made sure Lao Tzin's feet were in, slammed the door, and darted around to climb into the driver's seat. He was too engrossed in getting started to notice the light of interest in his companion's slitted brown eyes.

Automatically his hand reached out and flicked on the radio after he shifted into high. A moment later music came out. Jerry pressed the station buttons until he located news. He adjusted the tone control for voice.

To Lao Tzin each of these features, and indeed every detail of the car, was as revealing as an artifact to an archaeologist. The material of the clothes he now wore, their workmanship, coloring, and style told him further volumes. The rayon sox he now wore, coupled with the operation of the speedometer and the tone of the radio, gave him an accurate picture of the state of development in medicine and surgery.

He had seen the U and the S from the road sign repeated on the side-walls of the tires. He wondered at the connection. From the speedometer he concluded that the 1 and 2 were numerals, and that 0 was zero. As the car sped along he studied the various meters on the dashboard and concluded correctly that numbers were written in the decimal system, and that the symbols 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 0 were all that were used.

It took Jerry only fifteen minutes to make it to the next town to a hospital; but in that time Lao Tzin had

learned over twenty of the letters of the alphabet and much of the construction of words from license stickers, lettering on instruments, and an exposed segment of a newspaper page on the seat between him and the driver.

A very revealing stroke of luck came when Jerry slowed a little to read two words on a sign.

"Fall River," he said, half to himself.

Lao Tzin eagerly coupled the sounds with the letters and made seven connections between sounds and letters.

**E**XCEPT for occasional shiftings and moanings which enabled him to glance outside the car briefly, he had pretended to be in a stupor. This was very easy to do, with all the new details in his mind that needed co-ordinating. He was mastering the number symbols of arithmetic and becoming used to them, though he did not yet know the equals, plus, or minus symbols. He was making a partial order out of the flow of sounds from Jerry's lips with the help of the seven connections between spoken and written language he had gleaned from Jerry's reading of the road sign.

He was rapidly entrenching his new facts, using every trick of memory association he knew to plant them indelibly. At the same time he was studying the town of Fall River, its people and buildings. Concrete walks, baked bricks, Neon signs, canned goods in store windows,—all told their story. All were catalogued alongside similar or identical things deep in Lao Tzin's storehouse of memory.

The town itself was situated in a spot where, fifty thousand years ago when he had retired to his secret crypt, there had been a deposit of

gravel and boulders that formed a small mountain whose peak had been five hundred feet above the present level of Fall River. It was gone with no trace. Lao Tzin remembered one particular boulder that must have weighed at least a hundred tons. It was gone.

Everything was changed except for the high giants of solid rock that still towered above their surroundings, disdainful of the inroads of time and change that had wrought so drastically on lesser terrain below.

Lao Tzin made a mental note to re-examine the structure of this section before entrusting himself to it for another fifty thousand years.

Jerry Goodman pulled his car into the driveway of the local hospital. He dashed inside, returning a few minutes later with a doctor and two internes.

The doctor, Lao Tzin saw, was a young man no more than twenty-five years old. His calm intelligent eyes had something different about them that caused Lao Tzin's breath to hesitate an instant. He dismissed the feeling and promptly forgot it.

He had learned enough now to know what was coming during the next hour or so. He willed himself slowly back into the world of his mind. Sounds faded from consciousness. Vision dimmed. Sensation from his body retreated into non-existence.

In his place he left only hypnotic directives that would make him seem a victim of complete amnesia under any tests the doctor might devise.

**HE** BEGAN to realize how disturbed he was when he perceived the direction of travel of his thoughts after the bonds of the flesh were severed by the mechanism of sleep.

In fact, there was no direction of travel. His thoughts went straight to

their goal;—the world of his birth.

How long had it been since he thought of his birthplace? It had been at least a hundred thousand years! Yet his memories of it were still as vivid as those of any other era.

Idysrill! An island of not quite a million square miles and a population of over three million. Yet it had been the world leader a million and a half years past when he was born. It had survived almost unchanged through many geologic catastrophes, until, still unsunk, it had been transferred to the north polar region by the shifting of the Earth's axis. For all he knew it was still there, above the surface. Perhaps it was covered with thick depths of ice.

Childhood memories crept shyly into the glaring brilliance of thought. The first great problems of his existence shook him again and left him lonely and disturbed.

He lived again in moments the day he had faced facts and realized that he was different than other men,—immortal. He had never discovered why he was deathless. Never in all the million and a half years of his existence!

For a thousand years he had tried to adjust himself to perpetual life, while all around him changed and was new. Science had been born and had grown to adulthood by the time he mastered his own capabilities and saw that he must retire from the changing world into a world of his own where he could follow Thought to its highest pinnacles.

While he laid plans for his retirement from active life he carried on his eternal quest for someone like him,—immortal. He never succeeded. Eventually he had perfected his machinery for preserving his body indefinitely. Its only drawback had been that the atomic pile could keep

operating at the proper power output a mere fifty thousand years. After that he would be forced to return to a completely changed world and hunt out the ore deposits, teaching men to serve him while he directed the work of rebuilding the pile.

Only then could he return to his eternal sleep and release from the duties of the flesh.

A million and a half years! In that time all continents had changed beyond recognition. Races of men had changed beyond recognition;—at times for the worse, and at other times for the best. Sometimes they had returned to the old norm of his birth.

Never had he found another immortal. And never had he found the least inkling of a reason for his own immortality. It was involuntary immortality. At times it was even protesting immortality. It was also self preserving immortality, for it kept his mind and body so healthy that he could never hold a sick thought like self destruction.

If there had been only one other than himself to go through the eternal ages by his side! Time was so fleeting that mortal companions were gone before they were known with any degree of completeness. They were gone before they could develop into anything more than semi-comprehending puppies.

**T**HERE had been a time at first when he enjoyed the God-like task of injecting his mind into the development of a civilization, giving it the benefit of his experience, raising it to the top. There had been a time when he travelled the spaceways with men who would never have left the Earth without his technical gifts. Men who would have looked longingly at the stars, and

slipped back into barbarism at the point of attaining the dream of freedom.

A half million years, a hundred journeys into the world of men, and and he had tired of this sport. All too often he had only hastened the day of reckoning when civilization destroyed itself and men returned to tribal life and forgot the heritage of their past.

Thereafter he had contented himself with merely studying the ways of man as an interesting sideline while engaged in the serious task of locating another Uranium deposit or two to rebuild his power source. With it rebuilt he had wasted no time in returning to his dream world where science and philosophy were far too advanced for mere mortals to begin to comprehend.

Until now—

His thoughts seized on the cause of his mental unrest and returned to the present, though still keeping clear of neural connection with the body.

A dim candle light in the vastness of the night. A smell of familiar foods in the depths of a strange jungle. *A light like his own in the eyes of a mortal!*

He cautiously sent a tentacle of awareness to his hearing sense, ready to withdraw its body disturbing contact if tests were being made by that doctor.

There was only silence.

He sent an exploring, pinpoint awareness wandering through his body, widening it finally when he was sure there were no gadgets attached to him to measure anything.

Last, he permitted sight to contact his mind. He was in a bed. No one was in the room. There were bars over the lone window. It was night.

His exploring consciousness discovered something. He reached a fin-

ger up to confirm it. There was a fine puncture in the bend of his right arm where a needle had gone in to sample his blood.

Frowning in concentration he attached his mind to the impressions that were being made when he "withdrew". He let them proceed through the time he had been withdrawn from mental awareness of the outside, listening to the sounds, the voices of the doctor, Jerry, and various other people.

Much of conversation had been lost through lack of established comprehension of the language. What he could make something out of gave no indication of anything outside of what he had expected.

He had been fed.

**T**HE NIGHT nurse came in. She was beautiful and young,—no more than twenty. When she turned on the bedlight he saw that she was carrying several magazines. It was surprisingly easy to get her to stay and read to him.

In a spirit of camaraderie she sat on the bed beside him so that he could co-ordinate the written words and spoken sounds. He let her read that way for half an hour before trying the second stage. She seemed to fall in almost too easily with his designs.

He would point at a word and she would pronounce it clearly and try various ways to impart its meaning until he understood. He found himself wondering at her tireless patience and good nature.

"The people of this age are certainly the most likeable I have ever known," he thought. The realization of the truth of that thought startled him.

Following it, another conclusion struck him with the impact of a physical blow. This nurse KNEW she was teaching her language to one who had

never learned it before.

Refusing at first to believe his conclusion, Lao Tzin studied her closely. It became obvious that she was going about it entirely in the manner of one teaching a foreigner rather than one trying to get a victim of amnesia to remember.

He debated in the back of his mind whether he should try to probe her thoughts. If he did there was a strong possibility that she would recognize his powers and realize how dangerous he could become. His greatest safety lay in seeming harmless and easy to overcome. If this nurse knew, for example, that he could stop her heart at any instant he chose,—killing her without a trace of the method, she would fear him rather than enjoy teaching him.

If the world knew that within his mind were secrets that could be used to destroy or dominate all countries, there would be a mad scramble to enlist his support on one side or the other of whatever the present power lineup happened to be; or a consistent effort to destroy him.

Lao Tzin had discovered long ago that no mortal could conceive of a man with unlimited wisdom and power who did not also have the urge to use it in some way. They simply could not understand a man being so advanced that he didn't care to BOTHER about changing over humanity or influencing its course.

So it was better to play a game in which those he met took the initiative, while he occasionally maneuvered things a step along toward his main objective;—the renewing of his atomic power source.

He was grateful for whatever motives this nurse had in teaching him the language so efficiently. His suspicions of those hidden motives would have to wait.

His interest in her had awakened,

however. He noticed that she never looked directly at him, even when she seemed to. She looked at the bridge of his nose or at his lips; never into his eyes. This was a trick of one who either knows your own mental power and shies from it,—or one who possesses such power and has learned to veil it.

She was intensely interested in her task of teaching him. She was so interested that she didn't seem to notice that he was learning far more rapidly than he pretended. Already he could have talked quite fluidly to her in this language he had now learned was called English. Instead, he pretended to forget from one moment to the next, while she patiently repeated what she had gone over, again and again.

Finally he was sure he could handle the language by himself. He felt that to prolong this session would be to increase the danger of him revealing too much of his abilities. He feigned weariness. She took the hint and left, not taking the magazines and papers.

**H**E HAD AN uneasy moment after she left. At the door she had looked directly at him for a brief instant, with eyes that seemed to see through all his subterfuge and acting and know all about him. For the second time in the past day he had felt something about a human being that he had not experienced before in all his one and a half million years of existence.

His hand slowly moved up and let a finger touch the small puncture on his arm where a sample of his blood had been taken. Routine, perhaps. But was it? Did he dare chance remaining here? What detailed progress had chemistry made in this age? The people seemed—different, and therefore in many ways more dangerous.

He rose softly and opened the closet door. The clothes the driver of the car had given him were hanging there. He noticed with gratitude that someone had provided a pair of shoes that fit him.

He stood looking at the clothes in indecision. He didn't like to be so unsure of himself. He preferred dealing with mortals who were transparent in their thoughts and actions.

The doctor and the nurse. Could he turn his back on them and not fall into the human failing of letting curiosity get the best of him? What had made them stand out above or apart from all other humans of all varieties in all ages? What gave him his feeling of inadequacy in their presence?

Suddenly he decided his primary objective could wait. He would first solve this mystery. Closing the closet door softly he returned to his hospital bed. Soon he was in normal sleep in which consciousness lies completely dormant.

**S**EVERAL days passed. Lao Tzin was left almost entirely to himself. His meals were brought regularly. A nurse with no outstanding characteristics took his temperature and pulse each morning around ten o'clock.

By the evening meal of the second day he had finished all the printed matter the nurse had brought him the first night. He placed it all on the tray with the dishes after he had eaten.

Half an hour after it was all taken away an orderly came with half a dozen books which he found were novels laid in current times and surroundings. More purposive actions on the part of his keepers! He had been taught the language. Now he was being given a chance to learn all about existing society and how it ticked!

He frowned, then shrugged his shoulders philosophically. It would



save him at least a month of finding out first hand. He spent most of his time that night and all the next day reading and absorbing the contents of the books. At the end he felt sure he could take a place in any stratum of society and get by without attracting too much attention to himself.

He placed the books with the remainder of his meal as he had the magazines. When the orderly returned with more he could barely contain his satisfaction. There were three mathematics books, an atlas of the world, a world history volume, and three books on the subjects of physics, chemistry, and biology.

In two hours he had mastered the symbols of the sciences and mathematics and skimmed through those books as an exercise in fixing the symbols indelibly in his mind. He was amused at the wealth of misconception and loose thinking contained in what were obviously the latest authorities on the subjects.

The biology volume was fascinating with its revelation of many new forms of animal life adapted to special uses. Many common species of the last time he had come out into the world were evidently now extinct.

He reserved the atlas and the history for the last. The map of the world appalled him. There had been several gigantic changes in land areas. Fifty thousand years had seen more change than the half million years preceding it!

Then he had been about fifty miles from the Pacific ocean. Now it was to eight hundred miles away! The huge salt marshes that split the North American continent were gone. In their place was the great central plain with the Mississippi River running through it!

The continent had sunk in the southwest leaving a long peninsula called Baja California where there

had been an inland mountain range.

Lao Tzin felt a sinking sensation at how many changes had been going on. He might have chosen to sleep in one of those areas and been destroyed! As it was, some mysterious flood had washed out of the north past his resting place and swept down toward the gulf ocean, filling in the west central lowlands, driving the gulf ocean out of the central plains, and creating the flatlands of Texas.

It was bewildering, to say the least.

There had been many coastline changes of Eurasia and Africa. The fertile plains of northern Africa had become a desert. The rivers that had once fed the desert were now flowing in other directions. South America was virtually unchanged. Of the huge continental area in the Pacific, only Japan was left.

The history book disclosed what he had been led to expect from the violent changes in land distribution. There had been continual mass migrations of huge populations, continual wars and the consequent blending of race stocks. The dominant race was now white skinned instead of yellow. The cultured black race had descended to total savagery and loss of their heritage of culture. There was no sign of knowledge of the blacks ever having been one of the most civilized and integrated races on Earth.

WHEN Lao Tzin finished the history and the atlas he was left with a feeling of having read an impossible fantasy beyond the wildest of imaginings. Whole branches of the human race had vanished without a trace. The remaining branches had blended so swiftly that there was very little differentiation except in color, with the exception of the Ongwees, now called Indians, and the Nubians, now called negroes, who seemed to

have gone into reverse evolution to become physically backward instead of the magnificent specimens they had once been.

Most fantastic of all was the fact that there was little or no trace left of the age that had been flourishing fifty thousand years ago. The history dealt briefly with legend at the dawn of known history. All too plainly Lao Tzin saw the sources of the distorted legends in the lost sciences and history of the forgotten past, transposed into the increasingly superstitious thinking of pastoral tribes—survivors of unknown tragedies.

He put the books with his dirty dishes this third time with a feeling of insecurity. The Earth had ceased to be the calm, stable globe it had been for so long. It might not be so wise to entrust himself to its new unpredictableness for a solid fifty thousand years again.

He was getting "in touch" with the world again, and it "felt" different than it ever had before in all his existence. A new "note" had entered in in some subtle way. It was not exactly the rapid changes in geography. It wasn't entirely the modern trend toward blending of all human races into one. It was a composite of these things plus something he couldn't lay his finger on.

He brooded on it for several hours to the exclusion of other interests. In the end the true cause of the feeling rose to the surface and it was—the doctor and the nurse again.

He had seen the doctor for only a few minutes under circumstances where he didn't dare analyse him too closely. He had seen the nurse only for a few hours that first night. She hadn't returned, but had been replaced by other nurses.

Neither the nurses or the internes spoke to him. They performed their duties quickly and silently and left.

They were obviously under strict orders—from that doctor or that nurse. The books they brought were obviously carefully chosen—by the doctor or that nurse that had taught him English.

Were they waiting for HIM to make a move? If so, what move should he make? Should he pretend to "recover" from his amnesia, choosing an identity and origin from one of the novels he had read? He could do that very nicely and probably fool everyone,—except the doctor and that nurse.

Maybe they wanted him to try such a move so as to fool the regular personell. Or maybe they were merely waiting for him to put on his clothes and walk into the night so they would be rid of him.

If that were so, they were behaving unlike mortals. In fact their whole behavior pattern was more like his own, in an embryonic fashion. At the same time his own behavior was becoming more like that of a mortal full of impatience.

**H**E RECALLED the time, half a million years before, when he had patiently waited twenty years for a man to die of old age so that he could carry out his plans of the moment without opposition. Now he was fretting under a three or four day stay in a hospital room! It didn't make sense.

He narrowed his alternative courses of action down to two choices. He rejected both of them and started over again. In the end he tried to decide between a show of power and plain flight. He knew the reasons for this. The logical thing to do was ask an interne to tell the doctor he wanted to see him; but he was unable to bring himself to doing that for some reason.

The considering of a show of power

would serve as a preface to meeting the doctor. Or the two could be combined by contacting the mind of the doctor with the full force of his own mental power.

He drew back from doing that. Was he afraid? He felt a fear of something. He recognized that. It wasn't a fear of anything he could lay a finger on, however.

He could have seized control of the mind of an interne or nurse, drained it of information in a split second, and dropped it. He felt that would be a useless thing. Neither the doctor or that nurse would take the regular staff into their confidence on anything other than routine duties and specific orders.

Plain flight, on the other hand, offered the most entertaining prospects. If he put on the clothes and walked out he could soon lose himself in anonymity and go about his business as he had intended to do.

Then why didn't he? The reasons for that were also obscure. And because they were obscure it could only mean that there was some psychological factor underneath his present frame of mind. That, in turn, meant that some factor of his early existence must have been awakened.

With that thought he suddenly knew what had been bothering him all along. And with that knowledge he reached up at the head of the bed and pressed the button that would summon the nurse on duty.

She came at once, a plain, middle aged woman who was making a lifetime career of nursing. She opened the door and stood just inside the entrance, looking at him questioningly.

"Tell the doctor I will see him now," Lao Tzin said. It was the first time he had spoken aloud in English.

The nurse nodded and backed out, closing the door after her. Lao Tzin

waited. He knew now why the doctor had not shown himself and why the nurse had not come back after her first evening. They had been patiently waiting for him to come to his own conclusions and make the move he had just made.

They had provided the information necessary for him to learn of the modern world—and waited for him to think and assimilate.

He found his heart was pounding. He was, in many respects, a trifle disappointed with himself in this situation. A residue of subconscious frustration had been uncovered. It had given him three uncomfortable days and prevented him from seeing the obvious;—that these highly intelligent people had at once seen he was of no known race, was either from some other planet or had come from the past in some way; and had left him alone while he acquainted himself with them and their civilization so that conversation would be on an intelligent basis of understanding.

Even now, when he could see all this so clearly, there was a lingering thought that had all the tagmarks of rising from that frustration center. How could these two people, the doctor and the nurse, react so intelligently to the situation with only the experience of a single lifetime of less than thirty years? How could they have affected him so strangely?

The answer, he knew, was a wish fulfillment. He wanted them to be immortals. He still wanted, in the depths of his being, to have companions to go through eternity with. That was of course impossible. The mutation that had given him immortality was not transferable. He had had offspring and his children had died of old age. He had studied and experimented centuries at a stretch without discovering anything different about himself that would show

in any test.

It might be possible that in some age there would appear another involuntary immortal such as he. It could be in this age. But two? Impossible!

**T**HE DOOR from the hall opened slowly. In spite of himself, Lao Tzin felt his eyes glued to that slowly opening door so strongly he couldn't pull them away. His heart was a fist pounding at his ribs painfully.

The door was open now. The doctor and the nurse were standing there, smiling at him. But there were others behind them. They all came into the room while Lao Tzin sat motionless watching them.

None of them spoke. They just looked at him closely as he was looking at each of them. They were all young, apparently. The girls were twenty-one and the men were twenty-five.

The storm was raging in full fury in his mind; hope and superficial evidence struggling against common sense and the barrenness of one and a half million years of search.

Suddenly Lao Tzin lashed out with the probing power of his thoughts. He tore into the mind of the doctor, lifting and spreading it unmercifully. He was careful not to hurt beyond repair, but he knew the terrible agony his probings could create in a defenseless mind.

He found a corner of what he had hoped to find but didn't dare believe. He "withdrew", his emotions choking him. And now he spoke.

"So," he said softly. "You are immortals, just as—"

"That's right, sir," the doctor said. There were small drops of perspiration on his face. "Just as you are."

"How did you know so surely that I was one?" Lao Tzin asked.

"I took a sample of your blood," the doctor replied. "It showed the I factor was present."

"I thought so," Lao Tzin said, his fingers finding again the small puncture on his arm. The full implications of what the doctor had said sunk in. "The I factor? But that means you know what caused this immortality?"

The faces of all in the room showed that they knew.

"Could you tell us a little about yourself, sir?" the doctor asked. "All we know is that you are an immortal. Your appearance indicates you are not from this age,—or perhaps not native to the Earth. We'd like to know more about you if you care to tell us."

"Hah!" Lao Tzin exclaimed. "You wouldn't believe me. I'll tell you anyway."

**H**E TOLD them. They listened with different expressions on their faces. They asked questions. They all seemed excited and intensely interested when he carefully explained how he had taught himself to blot sight, sound, smell, taste, and all bodily feeling from consciousness for any long period he desired, so that he could live in a timeless world of pure thought and pursue intellectual paths.

They looked at one another after this explanation with expressions that told him one of their major dreads of living forever had been the thought of boredom and inability to escape it.

At first some of them seemed inclined to disbelieve him when he told his age and claimed the human race was old even then. He spoke of the yellow race and its civilization of fifty thousand years before, advanced beyond the present white civilization. He described the geography of that time, and how the major civilized

centers had been either sunken under water or washed away.

When he described the appearance of the immediately surrounding country near the hospital as it had been fifty thousand years before, they nodded their heads gravely.

"That description agrees exactly with the evidence," one of the men commented.

In the back of his mind Lao Tzin was aware he was wondering just how foolish he was being, and just how unstable these modern immortals were. He knew one of his motives in talking so much was to impress them with the fact that he had long ago reached the full development in mental power of which a human is capable. If they were even two centuries old they would be able dimly to see how invincible he actually was.

"Explain this I factor," he demanded suddenly.

"It happens to be the substance that causes immortality," the doctor complied. "It isn't a single substance but a distinctly unique type of matter. It has the property of reproduction, but is much smaller even than any virus. Instead of being one type of molecule it is a composite of an unknown number of different types, all in a state of molecular flux. It's impossible to separate any one of the molecular types because it can change into the other types, and does do that immediately.

"Its behavior chemically is almost intelligent, within the range of its abilities. A small amount of it in any living organism seems to solve the basic chemical pattern of that organism and enter into the imperfect processes, completing them. That's why it produces immortality. It makes perfect the elimination of wastes from any organism. It keeps nuclear activity alive. It seems to recognize cancerous tissue and destroys it. It even

repairs nerve tissue when damaged. It stops reproducing itself when it is in sufficient strength, and starts up again when it finds itself low."

"The test for its presence?" Lao Tzin asked.

"Its presence in yeast nucleic acid causes that acid to synthesize into a complete yeast cell with cell wall and normal functions," the doctor explained.

"What led you to try the test on me?" Lao Tzin asked.

The doctor shrugged. "It's a routine test in this hospital," he explained. "There are many involuntary immortals in the world now who don't even know they ARE immortal."

**L**AO TZIN climbed out of bed and went to the closet where his clothes were. Indifferent to the gaze of those present he stripped and put the clothes on.

He was trying to realize his lonely existence was over; that for all the future he would have these people as his companions. A million years from now he would still have them. The Earth would change. Its mortal races would go down into savagery time after time and climb up again, believing their climb from barbarism to science to be unique in the history of the universe and of the planet.

But somewhere, in some protected cavern, he and these new immortals would retire from the repetitious pattern of daily living to develop mentally and explore the highways of thought.

Perhaps even—. He turned and let his eyes study the girls present; the nurse who had given him a start on learning English, the three other girls present.

"How many of you are there?" he asked the doctor.

"Hundreds," the doctor answered. His face clouded. "Unfortunately the

government carries on a systematic search for us and kills us as fast as we can be found."

"And who heads this government?" Lao Tzin asked dryly.

"An immortal," the doctor answered. "He was one of us at first,—until he decided to rule the world by himself."

Lao Tzin sat on the edge of the bed and laced his shoes. His fingers tied the conventional bow knot in the laces expertly, having acquired the skill in other ages when almost identical shoes were worn.

Everything repeated itself so exactly. Without asking, he knew that the buttons on the sleeves of the suit coat he wore were remnants of a time when they were necessary to discourage a man from wiping his nose on his sleeve.

He thought of the nuts and bolts in his atomic power plant—valet setup that ministered to his bodily needs while he rested in his hideout. He could probably walk into a hardware store and pick up duplicates!

There had been a Fahrenheit scale of temperatures in use when he was born. It had reappeared a dozen times through the thousands of centuries of his existence, always newly discovered by an individual in a newly born scientific culture. The *rutch* of the Ongwee civilization had been almost exactly the same as the standard foot of length of today.

So many details like that, repeated so exactly. It was almost as if the race were a huge organism that functioned entirely by instinct, and the independent discoveries of scientists and inventors were just an instinctive act of the race like the building of a nest is the instinctive act of a bird.

It wasn't, he knew. It was just that there were only so many possibilities present for any generation of man, and inevitably someone saw and took

advantage of those possibilities.

Sometimes more than one person saw the immediate possibility, like Newton and Leibnitz discovering calculus. And in spite of all the possibilities for variation from one age to the next similar age that could make them so vastly different, they did the same things and made the same errors.

Only one new thing had happened. The immortals. In the million and a half years since he had been born the accident of his immortality had finally been repeated for the first time! Except for the existence of the immortals the future of this age would have followed exactly the oft repeated pattern of the past.

A laughable, stupid pattern, when viewed from the vantage point of complete knowledge. The race would strive for space travel by methods that would never make it possible, while the true principle that would make space travel possible existed in elementary textbooks on an entirely different subject.

The urge to use Power would drive nations to final war, and subsequent decline into savagery. The downward cycle was just a little way off.

If it were not for the existence of those immortals, standing around him, watching him with their young eyes, barely a century or two old but destined to be still alive and seeing a million years hence, he could have secured his Uranium and renewed his power source,—and gone back to his mental world untroubled by the impending death of another civilization.

But now it was different. Now,—he choked with emotion at the wonderful prospect; he could have companions with him through the ages,—teach them and guide them until they were his equals. He could love and be loved. He let himself know how much he had always wanted that.

HE GLANCED almost shyly at the nurse who had taught him the language. His heart pounded excitedly when she returned his smile with one equally timid.

Suddenly he felt he wanted to show these infant immortals some of the powers they could expect to develop in a few thousand years. He wanted to impress them,—her. He wanted to prove to them that with him as their protector they need fear nothing in the world.

What should he do? Should he blast out the side of the room with a thought? He could do that easily. Should he send a bolt of mental force through the window and disintegrate that huge rock in the middle of the hospital lawn, leaving a giant crater?

It would be fairly simple to do that. Or—

"What's your name?" the nurse asked.

Her eyes smiled at him as he hesitated to reply.

"Mine's Joanne," she added.

"I'm Lao Tzin," he said. He reached out and took her hand in his and turned to face the door. "Watch," he said.

He held out his other hand across the room. The doorknob turned with no one touching it. The door opened slowly with no hand moving it.

And Lao Tzin moved through the doorway into the hall, his hand still holding that of Joanne who walked by his side.

THE END

# EARLY MAGIC

By



CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT



**A**LTHOUGH not always admitted, superstition often plays a part of our everyday lives. It is not strange, then, that man in his more primitive state and left alone to his own conquest of the elements should employ some unknown power to aid him. Unbounding faith was put in the magical powers of idols, signs and incantations. In this way early man worshipped his god, dispelled illness, and conquered his enemies.

Primary among early customs was the reverence to the sun carried out by the rituals of fire. These were common and still prevail among the native Indian tribes. With this ceremony the ills which befall the people are dispelled and the sun-god is moved to compassion.

A greater part of early magic was related to effigy worship and mutilation. Southern Germany, in some measure still follows the old practice of burning clay models of certain parts of the body which are affected by disease in order to affect

a cure. The bible tells of the method of "scapegoating". This was a ceremony in which the Jews burdened a goat with all their sins and sent it off in the desert. Before a Roman general committed his troops to battle a lead effigy of the enemy was burned and softened the strength of the actual enemy.

According to Hindu custom a sure-fire method of ridding yourself of an enemy is to make the magic powers more potent by writing the name of the enemy on the molded effigy. Names and magic words are more prevalent in the Mohameddan style of occult powers. The inscribing of special phrases has inspired the present day custom of good luck charms, and the talisman. Among Japanese custom, it is common for one taking a serious oath to write the oath on paper, burn it and consume the residue. It is believed that if the oath was not taken in good faith, the ashes will surely kill the person by poisoning him.

THE END

# "I PAINT from DEATH"

By ROBERT FLEMING FITZPATRICK





Most artists paint from life — this one painted from death. But when he did, the dead lived again, and terror stalked the world!

“GOOD afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. As you know at this time we are presenting our weekly open discussion between expert and critic. It is our pleasure to present to you today the noted and eminent American artist, Leonard Sundheim. And across the table from

him in our studio is one of the country's leading art critics, Jerry Craig.”

As Tod Porter intoned the words into the microphone, Jerry Craig felt a smile tug at the corners of his mouth. For he knew that Porter, while using the unctuous phrases of felicitation in introducing him and

He saw a mighty fleet of space ships flashing down out of the sky. They were huge and saucer-shaped.



Sundheim, could have stated the truth more emphatically if he had stated that he was presenting the two foremost foes in the world of art. He listened as the announcer went on:

"—it is a real honor for this station to be able to present two such prominent men. Indeed, the populace of Portland City, Maine, welcomes Mr. Sundheim and Mr. Craig.

"As many of you are already aware, the art exhibition has just closed for this season, and the two gentlemen with us now kindly consented to present their views on modern art before returning to New York. So without further preamble I will turn the discussion over to Mr. Sundheim."

Craig saw Tod Porter nod to Leonard Sundheim, and Craig's eyes left the announcer to gaze at the middle aged man seated across the table from him.

Sundheim had a strong face with sharp, calculating eyes. It bespoke the dominant personality of the man. A personality that had set him apart from the rest of the artists in the country. A man who had wilfully crossed the borders of conventionality to paint in a manner that had amazed the entire world of art.

And now, as Sundheim's eyes fastened on his for a brief instant before he began speaking, Craig felt the veiled animosity the famed artist held for him. For as Sundheim's severest critic, there was no open amity between them, Craig knew.

"Thank you, Mr. Porter," Sundheim's cultured voice purred into the microphone. And as the man spoke, Craig could not help but compare Sundheim's voice with that of his daughter, Helen. For it spoke of breeding, and the cultured poise that was so much a part of the Sundheim tradition. In that one respect, and that only, was Craig willing to admit that the father and daughter were

alike. In all other ways Helen Sundheim was different from her father. For her outlook on life, the very way she thought and acted, was bright and cheerful. There was warmth and feeling in her, a vibrancy of youth and love for living that was so apart from her father's way of life.

But then Craig's attention was claimed once more by the artist as Sundheim continued speaking.

"I realize that this discussion takes place in what almost might be termed an armed camp. For with all due respects to Mr. Craig, it is no secret that his views on art, and my interpretations of it, are in extreme variances of the genre.

"In the limited time allotted to me here I should like to be as brief and as candid as possible. So if Mr. Porter will ask the questions, I shall endeavor to reply simply and frankly."

CRAIG watched then as Tod Porter returned to his microphone with a tight smile. And then for the first time, Craig glanced off to the side of the studio toward the glass enclosed control booth. He could see a soft, finely molded face in the control room. And two large mist-blue eyes smiling out at him as she sat watching and listening. Helen. . .

"All right, Mr. Sundheim," Tod Porter was saying. "It is generally understood that you refuse to paint from living models. You have, in fact, originated what is now generally referred to as 'the school of the dead'. Would you care to comment on this?"

Craig saw Sundheim's eyes flash at him for a moment as the announcer asked the question. And he knew the reason for that brief glare. For it was Craig who had tagged the artist's work as such. Then he listened to Sundheim reply.

"You will pardon me if I correct you, Mr. Porter. It is not that I

refuse to paint from living models. It is rather that I *prefer* to paint from death. To me, the living, as such, is commonplace. It is everywhere around you. It is so much an integral part of everyday activity that its importance is lost. It is like a tree buried in the vastness of a forest. And to produce the proper effect, one must single that tree from the forest it is a part of. Then, and then only can the finer subtleties of the object be studied in their intrinsic values.

"And to do this, to separate life from the whirlpool of the living, one must go to the one source that completely severs that relationship. That source is death. I paint from death and endeavor to capture all of the richness that once was life. There is a calmness and tranquility in the mask of death that life, as such, can never capture. Any success that I have attained in my work has been accomplished with that belief in my mind. As to the so-called school which I am supposed to have originated, I accept the inference as a compliment. To be an originator is to open one's self to criticism. And, as in everything, it is always easier to criticize, than do."

Sundheim's words ended and Craig felt the stinging sarcasm of the artist's tone. He felt a slight flush tinge his cheeks as the announcer cleared his throat in an embarrassed laugh.

"You promised to be candid, Mr. Sundheim, and you certainly have made your point quite clear. Now we'll let Mr. Craig present his views."

Tod Porter's eyes turned to Jerry Craig, and Craig noted the faint smile on the announcer's face. It was apparent that Porter was enjoying the situation. In the week that he had been in Portland City, Craig had come to know and like the ace announcer of Portland City's largest—and

only—radio station. It had been this friendly attachment that had induced him to stay on for the special round-table broadcast Porter had suggested. Now, as Porter looked at him with that faint smile, Craig knew that it was his turn to speak. That thousands of people were waiting to hear what he had to say in reply to Sundheim. He heard Tod Porter saying:

"Mr. Craig, as one of the country's leading art critics, how do you feel about Mr. Sundheim's interpretations?"

CRAIG flashed a single look at the control room, saw the still smiling face of Helen Sundheim gazing at him, then turned his attention to the microphone.

"Since Mr. Sundheim has been candid, I shall take the liberty of being so myself," he replied. And as he spoke, his eyes fastened on the face of the artist seated across from him. What he saw in Sundheim's eyes, the cool contempt, the veiled tolerance, brought an equally contemptuous tone to his voice.

"Mr. Sundheim's interpretations of art, are, of course, no mystery to me. I have openly criticized his techniques many times. And, I am afraid, I shall continue to do so.

"For unlike Mr. Sundheim, I do not concur with the belief that life is commonplace, and that to do it justice on a canvas one must resort to death as a model. It seems to me that it is a travesty of good taste to tender to the art public a grotesque symbolization of life such as Mr. Sundheim employs. There is nothing beautiful about death. One need only look at the horrors of the battlefield, or the tragic hysteria of an automobile accident, or, more so, at the violence of murder committed a hundred times a day throughout the country. I ques-

tion the calmness and tranquility that Mr. Sundheim seems to think are an inherent part of these brutal cessations to life. I repeat. There is no beauty in death. And to paint from death is to impart only horror and a sense of the grotesque.

"I might even say, to impart a sense of the sadistic."

Craig uttered the last words, his eyes fastened on Sundheim. And as the words left his lips he saw the artist stiffen at the implication in Craig's voice. And, as Craig shot a swift glance at the control room, he saw that the smile had left Helen's face. She was staring at him now with a shocked expression. And already he could see a touch of anger clouding her eyes.

Tod Porter cleared his throat then and stepped into the breach of silence.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Craig. I'm sure that our listeners were very interested in your opinions. And now, Mr. Sundheim, would you care to tell us anything about your future plans?"

Sundheim shot a meaningful look over at Jerry Craig.

"I never speak of my uncompleted work. I let the finished product speak for itself."

"But you are working on a new painting?" Porter persisted.

"I am, yes. . . . And I will say that it is something extremely unusual. I hope to capture an entirely new concept. . . ."

"Would it have anything to do with the mummy the Metropolitan museum recently acquired?" Porter asked.

And as Craig watched Sundheim, he saw the artist's lips tighten.

"That is a question I prefer not to answer now."

And then Craig sat back and heard Tod Porter's voice drone off the end of the program. There was the usual forecast of things to come, and the thank you Mr. Sundheim and

Mr. Craig routine that was the standard part of the script.

And then the signal came from the control room that the program was off the air.

Without looking at Craig, Leonard Sundheim rose from the table and strode across the studio to the door.

Craig watched him go, and saw Helen leaving the control room to meet her father.

And as he watched them, he felt a bitterness inside him. For he knew that a breach had been opened between him and the girl. Just how wide that breach was, he couldn't be sure. But he knew it was there.

And he knew something else. A curiosity had risen within him concerning the mummy Tod Porter had mentioned.

Was Sundheim actually using it as a model? And what was the strange new concept he spoke of?

He rose and followed Tod Porter from the studio.

AS CRAIG stepped out of the elevator and walked slowly toward the entrance to the building, he saw her standing just outside the door.

He could tell that Helen Sundheim was disturbed. There was no smile on her face, only a frown—puzzled, and with a faint trace of irritation.

"I thought you had gone with your father, Helen," he said, as the door of the building closed behind him.

"I had to talk to you, Jerry. Dad went back to the house alone. He was . . . upset."

Craig nodded. And he knew now what was troubling the girl. It was what he had said on the roundtable a short time before. He motioned toward his car standing at the curb.

"I'll drive you home. We can talk on the way."

He held the door of the car open

for her and she got inside without replying. Then he walked around the car and got in himself. He started the motor and moved the car away from the curb and out into the light traffic, heading toward the edge of town and the scenic hills that ran down in a gentle slope to greet the shore of the Atlantic.

"All right, let's have it," he said, glancing briefly at the girl as he drove. "You're angry at what I said."

Helen Sundheim turned on the seat, facing him.

"It isn't so much what I think, Jerry, it's Dad. . ."

Craig shrugged. "I can't help the way I feel about his work. I am, after all, entitled to my opinions."

"But you didn't have to be so brutal," the girl insisted. "You practically called Dad a sadist!"

"I criticized his technique—his employment of death as a model. There was nothing personal in it."

A troubled note entered the girl's voice.

"That's just the trouble. You both are so vehement on the subject that you inject personal enmities without knowing it. He's very angry. . ."

Craig felt a bitterness rise to his lips.

"I'm sorry about that. But I don't think it should make any difference between you and I. Or does it?"

This last he said with a questioning note to his voice, and he knew there was also a challenge in the way he had said it.

"To me, no. . ." the girl hesitated. "But I can't hurt Dad and marry you while he feels this way. . . it wouldn't be right."

Craig's fingers gripped the wheel more tightly.

Then you're trying to tell me you won't—"

"I'm not trying to tell you anything like that," she interrupted him,

a pleading note in her voice now. "All I want is to have you and Dad get along with some semblance of harmony. After all, whether you and he realize it or not, you will be members of the same family."

A sigh left Craig's lips as he tooled the car off on a gravel side road that led through a long lane of trees to the house Leonard Sundheim had rented during his stay in Portland City.

"Then just what am I supposed to do—crawl to him and beg his forgiveness?"

"There's no need to get sarcastic about it," the girl said sharply. Then on a softer note, "I'm only asking that you go to him and—well, temper what you think and say. I'm sure he'll greet you with the same deference. But knowing Dad, I know that you'll have to take the first step. Will you?"

He wanted to say no. He wanted to stop the car and sit and give her a lecture on how business shouldn't interfere with personal problems. But he couldn't. He knew that the girl was in a troubled frame of mind. That she wanted to please her father and at the same time, them both together.

He stared out at the long shadows of evening that were sweeping down from the hills to the west, and knew what he would answer.

"All right, Helen. I suppose you're right. . ."

As the words left his lips he felt the girl move closer beside him and her hand touched his briefly on the wheel.

"Thanks, Jerry. I knew you'd see it was best this way."

He took a deep breath and smiled.

"For any other girl I'd say no. Consider yourself very lucky." Then his face took on a frown. "I suppose I'll find him working on his new masterpiece. Just what is this mummy he's using?"

The girl shrugged. "What differ-

ence does it make. Just promise that you'll not get into an argument with him. As you said earlier, every man is entitled to his opinion—both you and Father."

He nodded and slowed the car down as the house came into view at the end of the lane. It was a two story house, the old New England type, and in the lengthening shadows, it cast a weird appearance as he switched on the headlights of the car.

He had the thought that a mummy and this house went well together. If Sundheim had rented it for mood and the proper setting for another of his grotesque paintings, he couldn't have selected a better site.

He looked at the house with a sort of resignation. It would be better to get it over with as soon as possible. Anyway, he had given Helen his word.

He braked the car in front of the house.

**T**HERE was something fascinating about the mummy.

Leonard Sundheim stood in the middle of his closed study and stared at the glass topped table. Just a few moments before he had lifted the mummy from its wooden coffin and placed it on a table. Overhead a series of harsh fluorescent lights spread artificial daylight down upon the mummy. The light had a weird effect, playing upon the lifeless corpse of what had once been a living being many centuries in the past.

He stood now, beside his easel, palette in hand, his brush poised to begin the work of putting life on canvas that had long since vanished from his model.

And as he looked at the mummy, he frowned. He knew that it was a valuable museum piece, that only his reputation had made it possible for him to

obtain the mummy, and that he had received strict instructions not to tamper with its bindings.

But....

He wondered what that face must look like after some three thousand years.

He wondered what vestiges of a body might still exist, the handiwork of skilled embalmers from a long lost age.

Would there still be flesh that would be recognizable? Would it crumble to his touch and pass into the dust of uncounted centuries?

His eyes grew feverish in their speculation. For here was something that fired his artistic dreams as nothing ever had before. Here was life—in death—life that had defied the ravages of time. Life—in death, that had proven superior to anything modern science could produce. What then, must that life have been like?

He was goint to paint it.

But in order to paint it, he must see it.

He must unravel those wrappings. His eyes must gaze upon what they concealed.

He put down his palette and brush and walked slowly toward the glass topped table. Then he was standing in front of the mummy, looking down at it.

And as he looked he felt himself tremble in excitement. He knew he was going to break his solemn word, given to the museum authorities. It would mean sharp criticism. Possibly even ostracism. And the thought struck his mind that it would be just what that young fool, Jerry Craig would be waiting for. Something to tear his name apart with. It might mean the end to his career...

He tried to back away from the table, to pick up his palette and brush and paint as he had intended. But the

thought had grown in his mind now. It was a passion that had to be resolved. It would only be resolved when he unwrapped the mummy. When he saw with his own eyes what lay beneath those yellowed, faded linens.

And as the thought grew in his mind he knew that this was to be his greatest painting. That after this nothing would matter. Let them say what they would. Let them tear his name down in ostracism. Once he showed his painting, all that wouldn't matter.

He reached out then with trembling fingers. He touched the tightly bound linens that concealed the dried and ancient figure. It was the body of a woman. He had been told that. But even after many centuries he could see this fact for himself. The rounded curve of a stilled breast. The small hands folded across that breast.

The linen was tight under his fingers. He stepped back and moved over to a small table beside his easel. He picked up a small knife and returned to the glass topped table and the mummy.

Then his movements were swift and deft. The sharp blade bit into the yellowed linen wrappings and they fell aside. He worked from the head down, being careful to slice only the outer layer of wrappings so that his blade would not damage the preserved body beneath them.

And then he laid his knife down and with trembling fingers began to peel apart the severed linens.

They fell away from what should have been a dried and shrunken head.

But the head wasn't dried. It wasn't shrunken.

He stared in shocked amazement at a clear, smooth alabaster skin.

At a face that was thousands of years old and yet fresh and life-like.

FOR A LONG moment he stared down at that face. Then his feet, like leaden weights, moved closer to the table. And with a trembling hand he reached out and touched that skin.

It was cool to his touch. Cool—and yet strangely warm with some inner heat. Almost it seemed—some inner pulse of fire sustained through long centuries by some weird alchemy. But the skin he touched wasn't soft. It was hard. Hard and smooth. Almost as if it had been petrified. And yet he knew that this was not so.

A flame of excitement coursed through Sundheim then. And his fumbling fingers began to separate the other wrappings from the body.

He unwound the yards of linen from the still arms. And then he was gazing at the same smooth skin. Gleaming cool skin. Well shaped arms and hands. Hands...

He plucked at the right hand and noticed a curious ring on the index finger. It seemed to be made out of gold, and in the center of it was a round globular like stone that seemed filled with an amber fluid.

Gently he removed the ring from the finger and turned it over in his hand. He pressed against the stone experimentally, and suddenly it became dislodged and fell into the palm of his hand.

He saw then that it was not a stone.

It was a capsule. A small plastic-like capsule. A capsule filled with an amber fluid.

And as he held it in his hand it began to soften. It was almost as if the heat of his body were melting it.

He stared at it, felt it become pliable, and knew suddenly that in a matter of moments it would melt and the amber fluid would roll out in his palm.

And as the thought struck him his eyes raised to the stilled lips of the woman's face.

Then he stared back at the capsule in his hand. Could it be possible?... Was this amber fluid meant to be administered to those seemingly lifeless lips? Had some ancient people discovered the secret of immortality?...

He felt the first droplets wet his palm. And as the fluid struck his skin a strange tingling sensation passed through his body.

He made his decision in that moment. His hand reached out and he placed the capsule upon those unmoving lips.

Then his hand dropped to his side and he watched the fluid seep between those lips. He watched in a weird fascination, his every sense telling him that what he saw could not be. That this woman could not exist in her perfectly preserved condition. That this fluid could be nothing. Nothing...

And then a chill raced up the back of his neck.

*For as he watched, the eyelids fluttered. And the lips moved.*

A gasp of disbelief left his lips and he found himself moving back away from the table.

What he was seeing was beyond the realm of possibility. It was some strange nightmare from which he would awaken at any moment.

But he knew he was awake. He knew he was seeing those eyelids opening. He was seeing the hands slowly clench and unclench their fingers.

And then he was looking into a pair of piercing dark eyes.

**H**E HAD never seen such eyes. They did not belong in the body of a human being. They were cold and emotionless. Strong and piercing. And they were staring at him unblinkingly, delving into him, almost, it seemed, seeing through him.

He tried to tear his own gaze away,

from those eyes but he couldn't. He was held entranced by them. For he was looking into eyes that had slept through countless years. Eyes that should not have existed—yet were staring at him even as he thought.

And then the figure slowly began to move.

The arms moved to the sides of the table and slowly lifted the body erect. Linen clad legs slid over the side of the table in a rustling movement. And she sat there then. Sat there and continued to stare at him.

Sundheim felt a fear take hold of him suddenly as he stared at her. For he saw something in those eyes now. Something that hadn't been there before. It was as if the first shock of awareness had passed from them and a coldly analytical intelligence had now come to the fore. An intelligence that had been awakened from its long slumber. Awakened now to an abrupt awareness.

Sundheim took a step backward and his voice sounded in a hoarse grasp of incredulity.

"Who—who are you?"

As the words left his lips the sound of his voice seemed to smash into the silence. A silence that had become a tense, palpable thing.

And then she moved off of the table and for the first time Sundheim became aware of her as a living, moving, towering creature. For she stood taller than he did. And her face was cold and emotionless as his words struck her ears.

He wondered if she had understood him. And he thought that it would be impossible for her to know his tongue.

And she answered him.

"I am Zurona, earthling. Zurona of the Great League!"

He stood dumbstruck. *For her lips had not moved! And yet he had heard her words—in his mind!*

She stepped toward him then. Slow,



deliberate movements. And as he watched her approach, he suddenly knew that she had reached a decision. And again the words formed in his mind. Cold, hard words. Cruel and emotionless.

"The day of retribution is close, earthling. Now feel the might of Zurona—feel it ere you die!"

He heard her. And he tried to move as her arms swept up toward him. But her eyes were fastened on his. And now they suddenly seemed to grow in size, to swell outward like two swirling black pools. Pools of black flame.

And he felt his strength drain from him. Felt his body go numb.

Dimly he was aware of another sound. An outside sound. A sound that would have seemed normal before, but was completely alien to him now. He knew what it was. The sound of a car pulling up to the front of the house. And he heard the car door slam.

She heard it too. She called Zurona. She whose hands reached out and closed around his throat, pressing, squeezing with a strength that no woman—man he had ever known possessed.

He felt the blood pounding in his head. Felt his lungs gasping for breath. Felt the full power of her hypnotic eyes fastened on his, draining away his last vestige of consciousness.

And then there was only her face. Only her eyes. Nothing else.

Nothing but the cold laughter of her voice in his mind.

And her name. Repeating over and over as blackness claimed him.

"Zurona—Zurona—Zurona..."

**H**ELEN SUNDHEIM squeezed Craig's hand as she closed the front door of the house behind them.

"I'll wait in the library. And remember, Jerry, everything depends on

the way you handle Dad. . ."

He grinned at her. "I'll handle it all right. Don't worry."

Then he turned from her and strode down the long hall that led to the study.

As he reached the door he paused. A frown crossed his face. For a sound had come from behind the door. A strange gasping sound, and a scuffling, as of feet.

He knocked on the door and said: "Mr. Sundheim, it's Jerry Craig. I'd like to see you a moment."

He waited then. But there was no answer.

But there was another sound. A scraping. The kind of a sound a window might make when it is raised.

Then silence.

The frown deepened on Craig's face as he knocked again.

Then his fingers closed over the knob of the door and he twisted it.

The door opened.

"Mr. Sundheim, I—"

Craig's voice broke off and a look of shocked horror spread across his face.

He was staring into the room. And Leonard Sundheim's body lay on the floor a few feet away, his eyes open and bulging, his face purple.

"Sundheim!" Craig shouted and strode swiftly to the man's side.

It was then he saw the deep imprint of fingers on the artist's throat. And as he saw them he felt a chill. Somebody had attempted to strangle him!

His hand pressed against the artist's breast and he felt the faint beating of Sundheim's heart. Then he heard the cry of Helen Sundheim as the girl ran into the room.

"Dad! Good heavens—Dad!"

Craig was on his feet then as the girl rushed to her father's side. He heard her sobs as she cradled the man's head in her arms.

But his attention was on the room now. He saw the glass topped table. The frayed and yellowed linen wrappings—and then he saw the open window.

The curtains were moving slowly in the wake of the night breeze. And beneath the sill of the window were more of the frayed linen wrappings—the same kind of wrappings that might have covered a mummy...

He was over to the window in quick strides. And then he was staring out into the cool night shadows.

Full darkness had not as yet descended. It was the shadow period when evening blossomed into full night. And he could make out the long terraced lawn that ran to the back of the house, and the lane of trees that bordered the hills.

And as he looked he saw something else.

A figure was moving out there. A figure, tall and shrouded in shadow. Moving away from the house and toward the grove of trees that started on the slope of the hill.

**C**RAIG vaulted the window sill in a single bound. Then he had landed on the grass, his knees bent to take the shock of his landing.

He ran then, across the lawn, after the retreating figure. And as he ran, his mind tried to picture what had happened, who he was chasing...

That someone had tried to kill Leonard Sundheim, he knew. And whoever that someone was, it was connected with the frayed linen wrappings. The chill swept through him again, even as he ran, trying to keep the figure ahead in sight. For he felt somehow, that he was chasing not a person, but a thing. And he didn't know why the thought had struck him.

He ran into the lane of trees and abruptly his vision was obscured by

the dense shadows around him. And just as abruptly, the figure vanished. He pulled up short, trying to pierce the darkness ahead, but without success. And a sense of frustration claimed him. For whoever, or whatever, was fleeing, it would be impossible to prevent that escape now. The thicker woods opened just ahead, and they were like a dark blanket of protecting shadows. They had claimed the thing he chased.

And as he stood there he heard a laughter. A laughter that did not seem to strike his ears. It seemed to echo somewhere in his mind. A haunting laughter, high and shrill.

Slowly he turned and retraced his steps to the house. He hated to go back in that room where Leonard Sundheim lay unconscious on the floor. He hated to face Helen and tell her he had failed to catch the person responsible for this. If only they had arrived a few moments sooner...

He reached the window and heard the girl's sobs again. As he vaulted over the sill he saw her still on the floor beside her father, his head still cradled in her arms.

As he approached, she looked up at him, shocked horror in her eyes.

"Jerry! I can't bring him around! You don't think—"

He moved over beside her and gently pulled her to her feet.

He held his arm around her tightly as he looked down at Sundheim.

"He'll be all right, Helen. But we've got to call a doctor. And the police. The person who did this got away into the hills. But right now your father needs medical attention. I'll stay with him while you phone."

He tried to make his voice casual, but he knew there was a tenseness to it. And he saw that the girl's lips were quivering. But she nodded and turning, walked swiftly from the

room and down the hall.

Craig's eyes fell on Sundheim once more. And as he looked, at the man, he saw his lips move.

Swiftly he knelt beside the artist and tried to catch the words.

"Zurona... Zur—"

He couldn't make sense out of it. Zurona. What did it mean? And that glassy look in Sundheim's eyes. It was almost as if he were looking at a man who was sleepwalking. There was a dullness to his eyes, a deadness.

But the purple cast had faded from the artist's features. Now there was only a swollen redness around his neck where powerful fingers had applied pressure. Fingers that would have surely crushed the life from Sundheim in another few moments.

He saw the artist's lips move again. Heard the same word repeated in a faint gasping sound.

"Zurona... Zurona..."

Only that.

Craig straightened with a tight feeling around his heart. He felt that somehow a terrible thing had happened here. Something that had only begun. He didn't know what it was, or what it meant. But he did know that murder was not the only object.

His eyes took in the empty mummy case against the wall. Saw again the frayed linen wrappings on the floor.

And a doubtful horror of suspicion filled his eyes...

"ALL RIGHT now, Craig, try and give me the whole story."

Craig stared at the crisp figure of Sergeant Bolls, the hard grey eyes of the man, and wondered if he dared tell him the truth—what he actually suspected.

He was glad that Helen was gone now. That her father had been taken to the hospital. She had ridden in the ambulance with him, and he knew

she would keep a vigil at the hospital until Sundheim regained consciousness.

As he thought of that he remembered what the doctor had said when he examined Sundheim. "Very strange. Almost a hypnotic trance. Pulse normal, blood pressure normal... Could be psychic shock. We'll know when we get him to the hospital." But the doctor's words hadn't sounded very convincing somehow. And Craig knew that that medical man wasn't as confident as he tried to make himself sound. But at least Sundheim was alive and in the proper hands.

"How about it, Craig, I've been pretty patient up until now," Bolls repeated.

Craig nodded, breaking his train of thought. Yes, Bolls had been patient. He hadn't pressed the girl, but had waited until she and her father had gone. Craig sighed.

"I can't really tell you anything, sergeant. Helen and I came home. I knocked on Sundheim's door, and when he didn't answer I opened it. I found him on the floor like you saw him. The window was open and I looked out and saw someone running into the darkness. I tried to catch whoever it was, but I lost the trail in the wooded lane behind the house. When I came back we called the doctor and you."

Bolls rolled his tongue around thoughtfully over his lips.

"And what about this room? What was in that case over there? And these scraps of cloth on the floor?"

Craig's lips tightened. This was the hard part. The part that he could not get himself to believe. He was not even sure of how he should say it.

"There was a mummy in that case. Sundheim was going to use it for a model on his new painting. The scraps

of cloth are linen mummy wrappings."

Bolls' eyebrows raised. "And what happened to the mummy?"

"If I knew that I'd probably know what happened in here," Craig replied.

Bolls snorted. "Come now, man, you're not trying to tell me there was anything supernatural going on here!"

"I'm not trying to tell you anything. I'm merely relating the facts as I see them. There was a mummy here. The linen wrappings are enough to prove that fact. And the person I saw wasn't carrying any mummy away. And yet the mummy is gone."

"Humph." Bolls grunted shortly. "Is that all you can tell me?"

The frown appeared again on Craig's face as he thought.

"There is one more thing... It isn't much, and I can't make any sense out of it, but before you came, and while Helen was phoning, I heard Sundheim say a word over and over. It was something like, Zurona."

"Zurona? What's that, a name?"

Craig's eyes widened at the police sergeant's question. For he had never thought of that. It had never occurred to him that the word Sundheim had said might possibly be a name...

"I don't know. I've never heard it before..."

**B**OLLS sighed. "Well, there's nothing more we can do here. I'll go back to headquarters and get up a searching party. If someone's trying to hide in the hills, we'll find him. And that's the only way he could go. But I'll send a couple of men to cover the shoreline just in case."

"You won't be needing me then?" Craig asked.

Bolls started to the door of the study. "No. But you better—"

His voice broke off as the telephone

rang down the hall. He looked at Craig and Craig felt a momentary fear course through him at the sound. Could that be the hospital? Had something happened?...

He followed Bolls down the hall as the phone rang again. Then the sergeant picked up the receiver.

"Hello?" he said. "Who? Oh, hello, Porter. What's that? Yes, somebody tried to kill Sundheim. Craig? He's here, yes. Just a minute."

Relief flooded Craig's face as he heard Bolls mention Porter's name. Then it wasn't Helen or the hospital. He took the receiver from Bolls' fingers.

"Hello, Tod," he said.

"Jerry," Porter's voice was shocked. "I got the news at the station just before I was leaving. This is terrible—what happened?"

Craig's lips were grim. "I don't really know myself, Tod," he said. "Look, can I see you tonight yet? I'd like to talk to you..."

"Sure thing. Drop over to the house. I was going to work on some radio equipment, but that can wait. I'll expect you then?"

"I'll be over in a little while. See you."

He hung up and turned to Bolls.

"I'll be over to Porter's place in case you find out anything."

Bolls nodded. "I'll have the person responsible by morning."

Then he opened the front door and Craig followed him out into the night. He watched the sergeant get into the squad car and then got behind his own wheel. He had the feeling, as he started his motor, that Bolls might be mistaken. For he seemed to hear again that cold, shrill laughter.

As he drove away he had a haunting memory in his mind of linen wrappings and an empty mummy case.

And a name—Zurona. . .

TOD PORTER lived on the opposite side of Portland City, on the edge of the sloping hills that met the night sea. It was a picturesque Cape Cod style house, and as Craig drove up he saw that it was lighted.

Porter met him at the door.

"Come on in, Jerry. I've been calling the newspapers and the police without any results. Nobody seems to have any details of what happened."

Craig followed Porter through the hall and into a combination living room and study. Adjoining it was an open door leading into what seemed to be a miniature radio station. Though it, Craig could see the tables loaded with radio equipment. Although he knew little about such things, he recognized a full short wave and amateur set, and other tables loaded with equipment that were beyond his understanding.

"Everything from radar to telegraph," Porter smiled, following Craig's gaze. "But sit down, Jerry. Could you use a drink?"

Craig nodded wearily and eased himself into a comfortable chair. He lit a cigarette and watched as Porter filled two glasses from a tabaret in one corner of the room. Then he returned and handed one of the glasses to Craig.

The cool drink tasted good. And it helped to ease some of the tension that was holding Craig like a leash. He sighed and glanced over at Porter. The radio man was sitting on the edge of a couch, an impatient look on his face.

So Craig told him. He started at the beginning again and went through the story. From the moment he and Helen had entered the house. When he finished he saw the amazed expression on Porter's face.

"That's utterly fantastic!" Porter

said slowly. "Who would have had a reason to want to kill Sundheim?"

"Nobody that I know of," Craig replied. "That's what makes it so unbelievable. And you're forgetting the important thing."

Porter stared questioningly at him.

"The mummy," Craig replied.

"What happened to it?"

Porter shook his head. "You don't really mean you believe that something supernatural occurred. . ."

It was the same thing that Bolls had said, Craig remembered. Only now time had elapsed. Time in which Craig had done a lot of thinking. He voiced his thoughts aloud.

"I wondered about that myself. I told myself it was impossible. But I've been trying to remember just what I saw out in the yard, the thing I chased. I couldn't get a clear vision of it, but I do know whoever it was was tall, and I also know there were mummy wrappings on the window sill."

"And this name, Zurona. . ." Porter said the word slowly, doubtfully.

"I think it has a great deal to do with what happened to Sundheim. I think it is the name of someone—I think Sundheim was trying to tell me that!"

And then Craig lapsed into a brooding silence. A silence in which he sat and stared alternately at his glass and across at Tod Porter. And the radio man seemed to be immersed in his own thoughts.

It was then that Craig heard the rustle.

It was a small sound. He might not have noticed it except it reminded him of linen rubbing against linen. *Linen wrappings!* . . .

The sound came again. And this time he placed it.

It was coming from the radio room behind him.

And even as the thought became apparent to him, he looked up at Tod Porter. He stiffened at what he saw on the man's face. For Porter's face was a mask of incredulous shock. And his eyes were staring behind Craig.

And in the same instant Craig heard the laughter.

The same laughter he had heard in the wooden lane. The same high shrill sound. And he knew he heard it within his mind!

**H**E SAW Porter drop his glass to the floor and the contents spill on the rug. Then Craig twisted in his chair.

He looked through the open doorway of the radio room. He saw an open window at the far end of the room, and standing just inside the window was a figure incredible beyond belief.

She was tall, almost toweringly so. Her head was partly shrouded in faded linen wrappings, and her body trailed loose ends of the material. Only her arms were free of cloth. And the skin he saw on them was as smooth and hard as the face that stared at him.

Craig got slowly to his feet and heard Porter gasp behind him. But his attention was held by the figure in the other room. For he was staring into a pair of piercing black eyes. Eyes that bored into his, seemed to penetrate into the innermost depths of his consciousness.

"The mummy! Jerry—it's true! *It's the mummy!*"

Craig even Porter exclaim wildly. But even before Porter's outburst, Craig had known. And then his own voice sounded hoarsely.

"Zurona—you are Zurona!"

Again came that cold laughter. He didn't see the lips of the creature move. And yet he heard it. And from Porter's sharp intake of breath he knew that the radio man had heard

it too.

"Yes, fools, I *am* Zurona. You cannot believe that I exist? Your puny minds refuse to comprehend what you see! I exist! I have existed for thousands of years—and now my purpose is at hand. The triumph of the Great League shall be swift! And all of your science cannot save you! You will die!"

The words shrieked in Craig's mind. And more than the words, he felt their hidden meaning. For though he did not understand what this creature said, he knew that the threats it voiced were not idle. There was a terrible power here. A power directed toward evil. Toward...

He saw Tod Porter suddenly come to life beside him. Saw the radio man whirl to a table and pull open a drawer. Then he saw a gun appear in Porter's hands.

Even as Porter turned with the weapon the cold laughter came once again in Craig's mind. And he felt the gaze of the creature swell in power and then switch over to Porter.

He saw the radio man's look of triumph suddenly vanish. The finger that held the trigger of the gun grew lax, and the weapon fell to the floor.

Craig tried to dive for the gun but Zurona's eyes flicked back to him and the strength suddenly seemed to drain from his body. He stood rooted to the spot, his legs refusing to answer the summons of his brain.

A mighty wave of wrath beat down on Craig's mind then as he saw the creature turn once again to Porter.

"So you would try and use your weapon against me! Fool—you will die for that!"

And as the thought screamed through him, Craig saw the creature move toward them. Her legs rustled as she walked, and bits of frayed linen fell to the floor.

And as she approached Porter, her arms reached out and slender fingers

reached for the man's throat.

Craig knew what was going to happen. He looked in horror as those fingers fastened themselves around the throat of Porter and began to constrict. He tried to tear himself away from the invisible bonds that seemed to hold him, but he couldn't. It was as if he had been chained to the spot, unable to move.

And he heard a hoarse gasp retch from Porter's throat as he saw the man try to free his own body from that terrible paralysis.

And the laughter came again in Craig's mind. The laughter and the horror he was witnessing as he saw Porter's body grow limp in the hands of the creature.

And then she dropped one hand away and held Porter's body with the other. And her eyes turned to Craig.

"So you see what happens to those who defy one of the Great League! And you shall see the full power of our legions as they sweep down upon you!"

The words shot through his mind and numbed him. And as he stood there, held by the invisible power of this creature, a terrible anger tore at Craig. For as he looked, he saw the incredible strength of Zurona lift Porter off of the floor as if he had been a bundle of rags and hurl him through the door of the radio room to crash against the wall and lie still, a huddled broken mass.

Craig fought then. But even as he fought he knew it was futile. He could not break the bonds that held him paralyzed. And the laughter shouted in his mind as the piercing eyes of Zurona swelled larger and larger.

He felt himself falling to the floor, powerless to prevent his fall. But it didn't seem to matter. For his consciousness was fading in a roaring tide of blackness. Blackness and the

crushing weight of Zurona's eyes.  
... It closed over him in a wave.

HE FELT weak and dizzy.

He lay on the floor as his eyes opened and stared blankly around him. For a moment he couldn't seem to remember. Then slowly awareness returned to him. He remembered.

Zurona... Tod Porter. Tod!

Craig crawled slowly to his feet, feeling his legs stumble for a moment as he rose. He fought the dizziness away and stood for a moment taking deep breaths. Then he turned and moved swiftly into the radio room.

He saw Porter laying against the wall. A small pool of blood had congealed around the base of the radio man's head. And with a sickened lurch in his stomach, Craig knew that Tod Porter was beyond help.

And almost in the same instant a number of other things became evident to him. He glanced across the room toward the open window. Beside it, a door stood ajar, and through the window and door came the gray light of early morning. His mind accepted the fact in a daze. He must have lain unconscious on the floor for hours!

But that fact was not the thing that brought an amazed look to his eyes. For as he stared around the room he saw that the tables of radio equipment were nearly bare. Tables that had been loaded with equipment of all kinds were now empty!

Where had the equipment gone? He knew, even before the question solidified in his mind.

Zurona...

But why? And how?

He moved swiftly across the room and pulled the side door of the house open. He moved out into the cool light of dawn and stared at the gravel path that lead around the house to the front. And what he saw

brought a puzzled frown to his forehead.

There were deep wheel marks in the path leading away from the house. Wheel marks and footprints. Wheel marks that could only mean one thing. Some vehicle had been loaded down heavily—and the footprints, also cut deeply into the path could only mean Zurona.

But was it possible? Could the creature have carried off the radio equipment of Tod Porter so easily? He remembered the way she had thrown the radio man's body as he might have flicked a cigarette stub. There was an incredible strength in her body. A strength unknown to Craig. A strength as alien as Zurona herself.

And what could it mean? Why had she gone to the trouble of stealing that equipment? Where had she taken it?

As this last question forced itself upon him he began to follow the wheel marks around the house. Out to the driveway, past his car still parked in front of the house, out to the road.

And there they stopped. The smooth concrete showed no trace. As the trail had ended in the wooded lane, so it ended here.

He stood there for a long moment staring at the road. Knowing that by now Zurona would have reached her destination, that her plans, whatever they might be, would even now be in operation.

He thought of Helen. And of Leonard Sundheim. And finally of Tod Porter.

A shudder swept through him as he turned back to the house. He had to go back in there. Back past Tod Porter's dead body. For there was a telephone he must reach.

He walked back into the house, past the broken body of Tod Porter

and out into the living room. He found the phone and picked up the receiver.

His voice was filled with desperation as he said. "Give me police headquarters—and hurry!"

**T**HE HOSPITAL room was quiet but for the labored breathing of the man on the bed.

Jerry Craig stood by the window, looking out into the afternoon sunlight. Behind him he knew that Helen kept her vigil at the bedside of her father. She had not stirred from that position since the previous night. And he knew that she would not leave until her father regained consciousness.

It didn't seem possible, as he looked out into the cheerful sunshine, that so much had happened, so many weird and terrible things, in the space of a single day.

He had spent the morning hours in the company of sergeant Bolls at Tod Porter's house. He had repeated his story over and over, leaving out no single detail. And each time he had seen the disbelief on Bolls' face grow less. For Bolls had seen the evidence with his own eyes. Evidence that could not be refuted.

And in the end the result had been the same. They knew that a man had been killed. They knew that a devilish creature was responsible. They knew that a mass of radio equipment had been stolen by that creature. But beyond that they knew nothing. Where had Zurona gone? Why had she stolen the radio equipment? And most of all—who was she?

Craig forced his thoughts back to the present. He turned and looked at Helen sitting beside the bed. She sat still and quiet, her hand touching the strapped arm of her father.

Craig remembered what he had



been told when he arrived. The doctor had shook his head in frank bewilderment.

"I can't understand it. He seems to be in a sort of trance. And he keeps mentioning that name Zurona, and trying to leave. We've had to strap him down.—No, there's nothing physically the matter with him. If we can offer any diagnosis, it is mental shock. There's nothing we can do for him but wait."

Nothing to do but wait. Craig looked at Sundheim's pale features. At the wide open staring eyes. Eyes that looked into space unseeing. Or did they? Did they see something that the doctors didn't?

Craig moved over beside the bed and touched the girl's arm gently.

"Helen, don't you think you ought to get some rest?"

She looked up at him with pale features.

"I could never rest with Dad—like this..." she said. Then there was a touch of horror in her eyes.

"Jerry—what does it all mean? Do you really believe that the mummy Dad was painting came to life? . . . Is that possible?"

Craig's voice was tired.

"I saw her, Helen. She called herself Zurona, the same name your father keeps mentioning. She was in the mummy wrappings yet..."

"But you said you could hear her voice in your mind—that she didn't speak..."

"It's the only way I can explain it. She didn't speak. Her lips never moved. Not even when she killed Tod."

The girl's eyes were sad. But then they became grim as she stared up at him.

"There must be some way we can find the answer to all this, Jerry. There must be a way!"

CRAIG shrugged. "The only way is to find Zurona. Sergeant Bolls is scouring the countryside. He may find a clue..."

But he knew he didn't have any real hopes. And then, as his voice trailed off he saw Leonard Sundheim stir on the bed.

"Zurona...Great Legion..."

And the artist fought suddenly against his bonds. The straps grew taut against his arms as he struggled to rise from the bed.

"Zurona..."

Craig stared at the artist as he heard Helen say, "I can't stand seeing him like this—what mad power does this creature possess? It's almost as if Dad was hypnotized!"

Craig started. He looked at the girl with a growing wonder in his eyes. Hypnotized. Of course! That had to be it! And as the conviction grew in him he suddenly saw a number of things clearer. And as they grew clearer, he knew that their one clue to Zurona was right in the room.

"Helen..." Craig's voice held a strange note as he spoke to the girl. She looked up at him.

"Yes, Jerry?"

"Helen, I just decided that maybe it would be better if we took your father home."

"Home? But he's sick—"

"I spoke to the doctor. He told me what he told you. That there's nothing they can do for him here. And as long as that's true there's no real reason to keep him here. He'll be a lot better off at home where you can take care of him. And besides, you've got to get some rest yourself. You can't stay in this room every minute."

There was indecision in her eyes as she looked up at him.

"I don't know whether I could go back to that house, Jerry. After what's happened..."

Craig's voice grew firm.

"But that's just it. It might be just the thing that will snap him out of this coma. At any rate, I think it's worth a try." And then he smiled at her. "And don't think I'll leave you alone there. I'm staying with you until your father regains consciousness."

He reached out for her hand as he fell silent, and he squeezed her fingers reassuringly.

"Maybe you're right, Jerry..."

"I'm sure I am. But you'll have to tell the doctor. He probably won't like it, but it's your decision."

Her lips grew firm as she rose.

"Very well. I'll go and tell him now."

He nodded and watched her walk to the door. After she had left he gazed back at the figure of Leonard Sundheim on the bed. He knew that he had talked the girl into taking a desperate chance. But he knew there was no other way. It might mean tragedy. He might be making a terrible mistake. But he knew he had to risk it.

There was only the one chance...

THE HOUSE stood lonely and forlorn on the top of a hill overlooking the ocean. It stood in its tangle of weeds and bushes, and its empty window eyes stared out through a curtain of trees at the shimmering waters in the distance. It stood alone, weatherbeaten and rotting away.

But it was not alone.

Zurona stared through one of the windows of the empty room she was standing in. Stared at the ocean, and her piercing eyes lifted to study the sky above. She could make out the faint outline of the moon, against the still daylight sky. In a little while twilight would fall and the moon would glow full upon the landscape.

A strange smile, grotesque and cruel, played around her bloodless

lips.

Then she turned and walked back through a musty hall. Her feet made small rustling noises as she walked. And then she reached the stairway leading down into the basement.

As she went down the stairs a weird glow of light seeped up around her. And then she had reached the bottom and stood surveying the scene around her.

It was a strange scene. A scene entirely out of keeping with the dilapidated house. Out of keeping with the musty dust and cobwebs of the basement.

A weird collection of equipment was gathered in the center of the floor. And as Zurona looked at it she felt a satisfaction with a job well done. The tools she had used had been meagre, and the equipment was only of the barest rudimentary design, but she had made it suffice.

For her knowledge had replaced what had been lacking. And certain principles had been added to the existing coils, and tubes, and other electronic paraphernalia. Principles that she knew were entirely unknown to the civilization around her. They had not yet advanced to that stage...

And she smiled again. That was good. It would make it that much easier. The ancients on this planet had been much more difficult to master. Yes, they had proven even too strong for the Great League...

The glow rose from the machinery. A pulsing coruscation of power, leashed and waiting to be utilized. At the center of the mass of equipment was a large television screen. Zurona knew it was inferior to what she had been used to, almost a child's toy in comparison—but it would do.

She walked slowly over to a complex generator from which an exposed cable ran to the massed equipment in the center of the room. She

had had to work fast. Without the niceties of insulation that she would have liked. But there was so little time...

And as she thought about it, her face hardened. The fools who were even now scouring the countryside for her. They might be lucky...they might stumble across her before the signal...

And a strange anger swept through her. She thought of the human known as Sundheim. Of Craig. Of Porter... She hated them suddenly. More than she had ever hated in her thousands of years of existence. She hated them for their weakness. Their loyalty. Their human instincts...

She walked slowly back up the steps to the first floor of the house. Then she stood before a window in the front of the house staring out at the tangled mass of growth that was the front yard. She saw the rickety appearing, but strong wagon standing there. The wagon she had dragged up the long hill, through the woods.

And she thought again of Sundheim and Craig. And as she thought, the desire to appease her hate grew. But she knew she couldn't leave here now. Time was growing short. But still, there might be a way...

She looked out into the gathering dusk that was starting its slow sweep from the east skyline. And her eyes seemed to expand—to grow ever larger as she looked.

Sundheim. Yes, Leonard Sundheim was the way she sought...

**T**HE BEDROOM was very still. Craig sat in the chair beside the bed and looked at the quiet figure of the artist lying there, his features paler than the white pajamas he wore. Only his eyes showed life. They were wide and staring. Fixed upon some far point.

Craig sighed and stretched his lean frame in the chair. A great weariness claimed him. He was glad that he had been able to talk Helen into getting some rest. The girl had been close to exhaustion with her vigil.

It hadn't been easy. He had to use all his persuasion and then finally say that he would keep a close watch and arouse her if her father showed any signs of returning consciousness.

So she had smiled wistfully at him and promised to get some rest. Now he sat alone in the room with the artist, his mind a dull aching mass of confused thought.

The doctor had given Sundheim a strong injection of sedatives to keep him from struggling, and they were working. The artist's body lay relaxed upon the bed, only his eyes seemingly alive as he stared unseeing.

And Craig knew it was only a question of time now. Time in which he hoped that his suspicions would prove to be fact. For he was waiting for something to happen. The very thing that the doctor had tried to prevent with his sedative injection. Craig had not objected. It would have been futile to do so. But he did not think it would make any difference if what he suspected were true. For it was not the artist's body that was willing this trance and the struggles to arise...it was his mind. And something else was ruling that mind. Something called Zurona. A thing that had risen from a mummy case. A thing that had walked after thousands of years of apparent death.

Fear took hold of Craig then. For he knew that he was fighting against a being beyond his ken. A being whose mind could control and enslave. He had had evidence himself of that. The brief encounter at Porter's house. He had tried to break that metal bond, tried and failed.

He had been forced to stand and watch her kill at her leisure.

And the same question pounded through Craig's mind. Who was she? What was she?

The tiredness of his body made him relax. Brought a drowsiness to his eyes that he tried to fight back. He must remain awake. Everything depended on his alertness when the moment came, if it did.

...He sat as the slow minutes ticked by and the night thickened outside the window of the bedroom. And gradually his eyelids became heavier, heavier until they closed and he slept...

**T**HE SCUFFLING of a shoe awakened him.

Craig opened his eyes and stared in a startled gaze at the bed. He saw Leonard Sundheim standing beside the bed, dressing himself with stiff, wooden movements. Already the artist had put on his clothes, and now he was clumsily fastening his shoe-strings. It was the sound of the shoes scuffling against the side of the bed that had awakened him.

He watched fascinated. Sundheim's eyes were not looking at his shoes. They were staring straight ahead, unseeing.

And then finally the artist straightened. For a moment his lips moved. A word formed on them.

"...Zurona..."

And then he began to walk with stiff, automaton motions toward the door of the room. He approached the chair where Craig sat watching him, and he passed by, oblivious of his presence.

Craig felt his throat tighten as the heavy footsteps of the artist sounded on the floor. If Helen awakened it would be all ruined...

Then he got to his feet and moved silently behind Sundheim, following

him out into the hall. The artist moved down the hall, past the girl's room, his feet making heavy thumping sounds as they walked.

Craig held his breath, waiting for the door to open. But it didn't. Then they were past it and going through the living room where the rug muffled the sound of Sundheim's feet.

Craig's hand felt in his pocket and closed around the butt of the automatic that lay there. He had taken it from Sundheim's bureau earlier. He had made sure the girl had not seen him take it. It felt comforting to his touch. A weapon that could fight back even against superhuman strength. Even against Zurona.

Sundheim reached the front door and opened it. He passed through the opening and Craig started to follow.

"Jerry! What are you doing? What's Dad doing out of bed!"

Craig stopped short at the entrance and turned to see the girl running up, the door to her bedroom open, a frightened look on her face.

Craig's jaw tightened and he motioned violently for her to be quiet. He waited until she had reached him. Then he gripped her arm tightly.

"I was hoping you wouldn't waken, Helen—but now that you have I don't have much time to explain. Your father is the one link we have with Zurona. I'm convinced that he's under a hypnotic spell—and that he can lead us to her! That's why I suggested that we bring him home. I was hoping that something like this would happen. It has—he's going to her—I'm sure of it!"

The girl's eyes flashed past Craig to the slowly moving figure of her father, moving across the front lawn, heading for the trees that bordered the side of the road.

"But this is madness, Jerry—it's too dangerous—"

"It's the only way!" he said sharp-

ly. "This creature has killed. She has your father in her power. The only way we can hope to save him is to find her. And only he can lead us there. Now I can't talk any longer." He shot an anxious glance at the retreating figure of the artist, heading across the lawn and into the trees. In a moment or so he would be out of sight...

"Helen, you call sergeant Bolls. Tell him that I'm doing, that I'll follow—"

"No! I'm going along! Do you think I could sit here not knowing what has happened?"

Craig knew there wasn't time to argue. His mind told him that the girl should not go with him, but he knew there was no other way now.

He nodded grimly and turned to leave the house. He felt the girl move beside him across the lawn. Then they were in the lane of trees, and closing the distance between them and Sundheim.

Craig breathed easier. He had feared that they would lose the track. The final link that remained. But they hadn't. And he knew now that they would find Zurona. And when they did...

**H**E COULD feel the girl breathing heavily as they climbed the steep slope of the hill. And his own breath seemed labored. It had been a long tortuous trail. They had skirted the main roads, keeping to the tangled underbrush. And finally they had reached the hill. Craig knew it lay somewhere about a mile north of town, and he suddenly knew they were reaching their destination.

Ahead through the trees he could see the house.

Bright moonlight revealed it, standing there, old and weatherbeaten. A forgotten mansion among the trees. Left to rot in the passing of

years.

And he heard the girl give a gasp as she too saw it.

"Jerry...is this where Dad is going..."

Craig felt her move close to him. Felt a shudder of fear sweep through her body. And he watched as Sundheim moved closer to the house, out in the bright moonlight.

And then he saw the wagon. A wagon with large wooden wheels. Wheels that would have made deep marks in the pathway beside Tod Porter's house.

"I think it is," Craig said lowly. And he knew they would have to move swiftly now. They would have to cross the bright moonlight of the cluttered yard. For if the creature was inside the house and Sundheim reached her first...

"You better go back for help, Helen," he said as he pulled the gun from his pocket. "I'll follow your father."

I'm coming with you. Look—Dad is going up the steps..."

A sense of frustration swept through Craig. But he knew he could not argue with her now. And there was little time.

He moved out of the shadows of the trees then and ran swiftly across the moonlight stretch. The girl ran beside him.

As they came close to the house, Craig could hear the pounding of the surf off in the distance on the far slope of the hill, and he could see the silver ribbon of water that stretched off into the night horizon beyond.

Then his eyes fastened again on the house. He saw that Sundheim had opened the door and entered.

They clambered on the front porch and Craig held the gun firmly in his fingers.

Then they were inside the house. Craig pulled the girl up short be-

side him. He stood, peering into the darkness of the hall, feeling the mustiness around him, the eerie dampness of the place.

And he heard Sundheim's heavy footsteps going down the long hall ahead. He couldn't see the artist in the darkness, but he could hear him.

He gripped the girl's hand in his free one and moved cautiously ahead.

And then the footsteps of Sundheim stopped.

And suddenly there was a sliver of light ahead and the sound of a door opening. He could see the artist then, his hand on the knob of the door, pulling it open. And the glow of light crept into the hallway, making weird phosphorescence around them.

Then he saw Sundheim move through the door and begin to descend a stairway to the basement.

CRAIG felt the girl's hand tremble in his. For as they moved forward to the open door the glow became stronger, and with it he became aware of a rising hum of sound. The hum of some kind of power being generated and used.

With the girl beside him he began to descend the stairs.

When they reached the bottom, Craig's eyes took in the scene with a swift glance. And triumph shone on his face as he saw Sundheim standing quietly before a figure in the center of the basement. A figure standing before a mass of electronic equipment from which the strange glow emanated and the pulsing hum grew in volume.

The figure of a woman, tall an imperial, clad in mummy wrappings.

Zurona!

In the same instant the creature saw Craig. And as Craig's gun hand lifted and his finger began to tighten around the trigger, he felt again the

cold laughter inside his brain.

"Fool! Do you think your puny weapon can match the power of Zurona? You have walked into this house at my bidding! You will do my bidding now—drop your weapon!"

The words of Zurona flooded into Craig's mind, flooded with a force that numbed his thoughts. And as she spoke, he looked into her eyes.

He tried to tear his gaze away, for he knew what that meant. But already it was too late. He felt his strength ebbing from his fingers. Felt them growing lax against the weapon he held. And then suddenly he felt his fingers part and the gun clattered to the floor of the basement.

Beside Craig, he heard the girl give a stifled gasp of horror as she gazed upon the creature before them. Then the voice of Zurona filled their minds again.

"So! You are the daughter of this human who is now my slave! You look upon me with horror! It may well be your last look—and all others of your kind! For I have brought you here to witness the might of Zurona. To see for yourselves how puny is your civilization. To see the coming of the Great League as it awakens from its long slumbers—even as I have!"

The words burned in Craig's mind as he fought to break the bond that Zurona had woven around him. But he couldn't. Her power was too strong.

He saw her turn then and face the mass of equipment. He saw the complicated pattern of tubes and coils and instruments that had been taken from Tod Porter's house. He saw the whining generator and the exposed cable that ran to the machinery. And a great fear coursed through him. For he knew that what he was

seeing was not electricity as he knew it. For there were no connections for outside power...

And as the thought entered his mind he heard the laughter of Zurona as she deftly manipulated dials and switches.

"So you wonder about the power I have? And you are right—it is not your electrical force. It is a force much greater, the power of space itself which I have leashed!"

And as she spoke a coruscating flash of light leaped up from the strange generator and the cable grew hot and gave off a brilliant light. And then a large screen at the center of the equipment began to glow.

The creature turned once more to them. And Craig felt the full impact of her eyes once more. They swelled, enveloped him, made his body an inanimate thing. Only his mind seemed capable of movement and only as Zurona directed. He heard her mocking voice then. And what she said brought a shocked amazement to him. And a growing wondrous horror.

"You have known me as a mummy. A mummy resurrected from the tombs of Egypt. And you think I am a supernatural being. But you are wrong! I will show you how I came to be wrapped in linens and sent into the long slumber. Watch—and you will understand the fate that now is in store for your world!"

The voice of Zurona faded away then but her eyes seemed to swell larger.

**A**ND SUDDENLY the world of reality vanished, Craig felt a twisting in his head, and he knew that the girl beside him must be experiencing the same thing. It was as if he no longer had a body, as if his mind were being transported across long distances, through swirling mists of time and space.

And then he began to see scenes. Flickering scenes that sped through his mind like a motion picture projection. Only he knew somehow that for the moment he was a part of them. They were real, vivid...

He saw a mighty fleet of ships flashing down out of the sky. Ships that staggered his imagination. For they were as no ships he had ever dreamed of. They were huge and saucer-shaped, with a gleaming plastic-like window set in the upper side. And in the ships, behind gigantic banks of controls, he saw towering figures of men and women. Figures that moved and talked in some strange tongue. Figures that reminded him of Zurona...

He saw the mighty fleet hurtle down upon a section of the Earth.

He saw a vast desert region and a rolling sea that bordered it. There was a great gleaming city on the edge of the sea, its spires reaching nearly a mile into the sky.

And as the great fleet approached the city, he saw the inhabitants moving to battle stations, saw great, snout-like weapons being thrust skyward, saw the first shattering bursts of fire pour from them as the invading fleet thundered down.

Jagged streaks of brilliant rays shot out in answer from the attacking ships. They caught the spires of the buildings in their lashing fury and the buildings melted in hissing streams of molten metals.

Thousands of people caught in the streams of death were snuffed out in tiny blobs of puffing smoke. In a few moments the entire city was a mass of flame and screaming ruin. Nothing could withstand the onslaught of those fiery rays from the attacking fleet.

But even as the city suffered its losses, so did the great fleet. The belching snouts of a myriad weapons

from the ground below shot bolts of flame and exploding energy into the sky.

The bolts struck ship after ship and they disintegrated into a mass of falling particles. The smooth attack, well formed and strategically planned, became a holocaust of exploding vessels.

It was a stalemate of battle. Continue and both sides would be annihilated. One side had to give. And there was only one side that could give.

The attacking fleet, its pitiful remnants, swept back into the heavens, arcing out away from the earth, trying to get its members into a formative retreat. And then the darkness of space enveloped the fleet and it shot at a terrific speed away from the planet.

And as the moments of its flight passed, another body grew in size ahead.

The Moon.

The scarred, pock marked surface of the satellite loomed closer, and the spent fleet settled slowly to its surface as huge sections of mountains slid back on metal rollers. The ships passed into the huge revealed caverns and rested in giant cradles. Then finally the openings slid shut.

And the scene flickered and faded away. Craig's mind was nothing but a swirling mass of darkness for a moment, and then another scene came into his vision. He saw a single saucer-ship approaching the surface of the earth. He saw it land on a desert area and shortly a number of figures stole from the ship bearing a coffin-like box. The box was carried to a great gleaming pyramid of cut stone. And then the figures vanished inside the pyramid.

When they returned to the ship they no longer had the box with them. And the ship took off silently

and then sped away into the sky.

THE SCENE faded again and suddenly Craig was back in the basement of the house, staring into the eyes of Zurona. A terrible suspicion was taking form in his mind as he looked at her and she laughed. Her voice answered his unspoken thought.

"Yes, it was I, Zurona, who was in that coffin. I was spirited into the pyramid to take my place secretly with the dead. And my ship returned to the Moon to rejoin the Great League. And there too safeguards were made. The Legions of ships rebuilt and made ready for the date when the conquest of the earth would take place—and succeed. For in those long past centuries your race was superior in its weapons, could withstand even the might of the Great League.

"But now you are as children. Our plan has worked out as forecast. Your race had degenerated in the passing centuries, until today you are incapable of defense against us. The Great League is now ready to move—to awaken from its long slumber, even as I have. For I am the signal. It will be I who will guide them on a controlled beam to earth. Once the ships are here I will awaken the legions waiting to take over your world. We have waited a long time—and now we shall succeed!"

Craig's mind was appalled at what he heard, at what he had seen. It was like some page out of a fantastic nightmare. Some weird occurrence that he would waken from and shiver with the gladness that it had only been a dream. But he knew that it had not been a dream. That it had been real.

And then he saw Zurona turn from them and move to the machine she had constructed. Her fingers moved



swiftly, deftly. And the screen suddenly sprang into life with a startling clarity.

Craig saw the moon rushing toward them and as he watched he saw a shaft of blue radiance leap out into space from the machine—through the walls of the house—into the sky—straight toward the surface of the moon.

And the scene on the screen showed the beam strike a section of a huge mountain on the lunar surface. The section slid back, even as he had seen a similar section slide back in what must have taken place thousands of years before.

And he saw the great fleet of saucer-ships cradled in the moon's interior, cradled and waiting. He saw the interior of the ships, saw the legions of beings in apparent slumber.

And then the beam touched a great mechanism in the center of the gigantic cavern. There was a flashing movement and suddenly the cradles began to move toward the entrance of the mountain.

And one by one the ships were hurtled from the moon's surface. Hurtled out to follow the blue beam back to earth.

There was a triumphant laughter from Zurona as the scene on the screen began to recede back toward earth with tremendous speed. And with it came the mighty legion of ships. Ships that were carrying the Great League to its final battle. A battle that would annihilate the people of the earth.

Craig felt the power of Zurona's mental bond fade for a moment as her attention was caught by the equipment she controlled.

And he fought suddenly. His will power struggled to move his body.

His eyes were on the back of Zurona, hoping desperately that she

would not turn and look at him.

Slowly his body moved. It seemed that it would take hours for him to stoop to the floor and pick up the gun in his nerveless fingers.

The crackle of the machine grew in volume as Zurona adjusted the controls, and the blue beam of radiance became harder, more sharply outlined.

And then Craig's fingers closed over the gun on the floor. And he lifted it.

Zurona sensed his movement in that moment. She whirled suddenly and her eyes lashed out at him.

Craig felt the impact of her superior will and knew that in a fraction of a second he would be powerless.

But it was all he needed.

**T**HE GUN in his hand blasted a thundering sound in the confines of the room. And the bullet smashed into the breast of Zurona, hurling her back against the machine.

For a full instant the power of her mind seemed to fade. And in that instant, Craig felt his muscles respond. He fired again.

Zurona had straightened when the second bullet hit her. Now she staggered slightly and Craig saw a confused look on her face. But as he looked closely at her—he saw the holes the bullets had made in her body—and there was no trace of blood!

In the same instant Zurona's cold laughter filled his mind.

"You fool! I told you your puny weapon could not destroy me! For I am not of flesh and blood such as you—I am—"

She started to move toward him but suddenly she reeled and stumbled. Her foot hit against the exposed cable leading from the generator and there was a hissing flash

of flame.

A terrible cry of amazed fear broke in on Craig's mind. There was no pain in it. Only terror. Then the cry faded away as Zurona fell across the cable.

A terrible spear of flame shot up as her body short-circuited the power of the cable. And a pall of smoke whirled in the air.

Behind him, Craig heard Helen Sundheim cry out in sudden fear as her body was released from the mental hold of Zurona. And across the room he saw Leonard Sundheim suddenly stagger and groan.

But his attention was riveted to the cable. Flames were shooting up from it, enveloping the figure of linen wrappings, searing away the cloth and what appeared to be flesh.

*And Craig was staring at a mass of coils and metal beneath that flesh!*

He knew in that instant the secret of Zurona. She was not a human—just as she said! *She was a robot!*

And then the flames hid her scared metal body, flames that swept over the machine and towered toward the ceiling of the basement.

Craig looked at the screen. It still showed a flickering scene. Showed the fleet of ships thundering down upon the earth. And even as he looked he saw the blue beam vanish. The guiding beam that was to direct the landing of the invading fleet. And then the screen puffed into flame and the heat of the fire scorched his face.

Craig wheeled, dropping his gun. He saw Leonard Sundheim staggering toward him, saw the girl throw herself into her father's arms.

"We've got to get out of here!" Craig shouted above the roar of the growing inferno.

And he grabbed the girl and her father by their arms and shoved them to the stairway.

The flames swept out at them, and acrid smoke choked Craig's lungs as he half shoved them up the steps ahead of him.

Then they had reached the first floor of the house and were staggering down the long hall and to the open door ahead.

The night wind whipped around them as they ran from the house. And behind them, Craig could hear the crackle of flames. Finally they turned and stood staring at the house.

"Dad! You're all right—tell me—"

Craig heard the girl sob in her father's arms. And he heard the gasping horror that was in Sundheim's voice as he spoke.

"...Yes, Helen, I'm all right...But I was powerless! I couldn't do a thing—that creature..."

And Helen turned to Craig with a fear in her eyes.

"Jerry—those ships we saw—were they real? Were we too late?"

Craig's eyes shot up to the sky. And suddenly he stiffened.

Far out over the ocean he could see flashing pinpoints of light!

"Look!" he shouted hoarsely.

**A**ND THE GIRL and Sundheim followed his gaze. They looked on in awe at what they saw.

For the pinpoints grew larger, moving at tremendous speed.

"Good Lord!" Craig heard Sundheim explain in horror. "They are real! And they're coming straight toward the beam!"

But even as Sundheim said the words, Craig felt a hope in his breast. For he had seen the beam vanish in the fire. Did that mean?...

And even as he watched he saw the fleet of flashing light dots arc down over the ocean. He knew they were too far distant to distinguish as ships. But he knew they were the battle

fleet of Zurona's Great League.

There was a roar of sound from the house and a shaft of flame shot through the roof in the explosion. And Craig knew that the last piece of Zurona's machine had been destroyed in that explosion.

"Look—Craig—the ships are crashing into the sea!"

Craig heard Sundheim's startled voice, and as he looked he saw that the artist was right. The flashing ships of Zurona's legion were striking the ocean far out.

There was a flash of light that lit the horizon momentarily, and then darkness claimed the ocean once more.

And Craig could no longer see a pinpoint of light in the sky.

The waves had claimed the robots from the moon. Would hide them for all time from the eyes of man.

Craig turned to Leonard Sundheim. He could see the artist's awed face in the light of the flames from the burning house. And Sundheim was holding his daughter in his arms. But he reached out to Craig with his

hand.

"Jerry, I—I don't know how to say this, but I'm a different man..."

Craig shook his head. "There's no need to say anything after what you've been through."

"I must say it, Jerry. I've been wrong. I see that now. I was painting from death, using it as a model—and this time it was my doings that nearly meant that destruction of all earth civilization. I—I hope we can be friends..."

And Jerry Craig took the artist's hand and felt the warmth of Sundheim's clasp. Then the girl moved away from her father and looked at Craig.

"What we've seen tonight must always be our secret, Jerry...No one would believe us if we told the truth. But we know..."

He nodded and took the girl's hand gently in his own.

They stood there then, and watched the house burn. Watched the flames bury a mad robot's dream in a fiery coffin.

There was gladness in their eyes.

## TRADING WITH BULK



By A. MORRIS



**T**O MANY an American housewife taking the money to pay the grocery bill in some of the Far Eastern Islands and parts of Africa would be chore enough. Aside from the usual beads and trinkets used in trading some of the currency of the natives is so bulky that it is not exchanged. An instance of such stone money is the *fei* used by Yapa. Assume that each landowner or man of means in the village possesses one *fei*. This may vary in size anywhere between 4 to 10 feet in diameter and resembling a huge wheel. When a trade is made the seller merely inspects the condition of the purchaser's *fei*. A simple inscription by local officials on the *fei* indicates that payment has been made for taxes and the like

assessments.

Metal money of the native rarely takes the form of our coins. Much in keeping with their logic they are shaped to resemble hatchets, spears and other implements of war. These, then, are strung together to make the price of a particular article wanted.

Most unusual, is the edible money of the natives of New Guinea and Africa. Some take the shape of bricks, called tea bricks. It is not uncommon to see a native pay for a purchase with salt stones. Rice cakes, tapioca coins are legal tender in various sections of Asia. There is no such thing as a rubber check is unknown in the Far Eastern Islands because rubber balls are accepted in exchange.

# The GOLDEN PENNIES

By LEE PRESCOTT

The little man stood on the corner selling golden pennies for copper. A ridiculous thing, but it was true. Why? That was the question! Was there an explanation?

FOR a Monday afternoon Chicago's Loop was fairly quiet.

Police Sergeant Clarence Duff jostled his way through the crowd on the Roosevelt Theatre side of State street. He was thinking at that moment how nice it was going to be to slip into Casey's Lounge up on Monroe in just a few minutes. He could almost taste the water that Casey would slip him over the bar. Only of course it wouldn't be water. Duff licked his lips and thanked whatever divine providence it was that had made gin such a misleading color. Whoever it was, he must have had a copper's sore feet and heavy heart in mind. Duff was sure he had both.

"Step right up, you lucky people. Step a little closer...that's it...here you are, get your gold penny, your real pure solid genuine gold penny for just one copper cent! There's plenty for all, so don't shove, don't crowd!"

Sergeant Duff came to an abrupt halt on the sidewalk. He shook his head for a moment as he focused his thoughts away from Casey's Lounge and back onto State street. He found himself on the corner of Madison with the traffic on the sidewalk suddenly blocked by a semi-circular mass of people. He himself was shoved solidly against the corner of a newsstand and he could feel the sharp edge of wood digging into his back.

"Yes, sir, folks, a real solid genuine pure gold penny. It is yours for just one old copper cent. Just a copper cent, that's all folks, a pure gold penny for a copper one!"

Clarence Duff swore gruffly and shoved against the backs of two men crowding him closer against the newsstand. "What's going on here!" he roared.

"Yes, sir, a real gold penny, better get them while they last!"

Duff twisted around and hooked his left foot over the counter of the newsstand. He pulled himself up on the counter and stared over the heads of the crowd.

What he saw did little to help his good disposition of which he had little or none anyway.

STANDING on the corner of State and Madison, huddled against a fire plug with a soap box leaning against its side, a little man with white hair and a cleanly shaven face was piping his song to the crowd and pointing to an opened suit case which was set on the soap box. In the suit case, glued or pasted on long pieces of cardboard—Duff wasn't quite sure at the distance—were what seemed to be little shiny pieces of yellow metal.

"Get your pure gold penny...only one copper cent..."

"Let me through here!"

Sergeant Duff hurled himself from the newsstand with a roar and into



There was a roar of sound and Clarence Duff felt himself jerked backward

the crowd. People parted with loud protests under Duff's flailing arms. But the blue uniform and the three stripes on his sleeves were more authority than his plunging body, and Duff knew it. It made him feel good.

"Get out of my way!" he shouted at the final line of onlookers. They got.

Duff found himself standing close to the corner curb. A few feet away from him, standing serenely behind the soap box and opened suit case, was the shouting little man. He had the strangest face Duff had ever seen. It resembled one of the faces out of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The hair was snow white all right, but the face was one of the dwarfs.

"Solid gold pennies, the bargain of the century, just a copper cent—"

"What's going on here?" Duff roared again.

Behind him the crowd, sensing the coming storm, was quick to put in its two cents.

"The guy's crazy!"

"Who the devil is he trying to kid—a gold penny for a copper one!"

"It's a gyp! He ought to be run in!"

"Do your duty, officer."

Duff strutted forward jutting out his square jaw ominously. The little man turned a pair of watery blue eyes on him. They looked down the length of a knobby nose that made Duff all the more certain the face and what went with it belonged in a Walt Disney short.

"What do you think you're doing here?" Duff demanded, glaring down at the little man.

The watery blue eyes smiled up at him. "Why, I'm selling gold pennies. Pure gold, real solid genuine—"

"You don't have to give me that routine again!" Duff roared. "Who do you think you're trying to kid, mister? This is outright fraud! Gold

pennies! Do I look like a dope?"

Somebody in the crowd snickered. Duff turned belligerent eyes on the mass of faces, but they had all suddenly become blank. He turned back to the peddler. A frown was screwing up the little man's face.

"But I am not trying to defraud anybody! These are real gold pennies! I made them myself!"

"Oh! You made them yourself? Well that's interesting. That's very interesting!" Duff snorted. "Even if they were real gold, that's counterfeiting, and what right do you think you have in selling them on the street? Have you got a permit?"

"Permit? I, ah, that is—"

"Hah! I thought so! You couldn't get a permit anyway for the Loop area! Do you realize you've been cluttering up my district and blocking traffic? I'm going to run you in. It's about time you bums and vagrants found out that Sergeant Clarence Duff's district is no dice!"

Duff started reaching for his handcuffs. There was a satisfied contentment on his face. Any second now the little guy would start squirming. He wanted him to squirm. It would be a lesson to any other stumblebums in the Loop.

**B**UT DUFF had forgotten one thing. The crowd. In the beginning they had all been indignant. On the side of the law. Waiting and anxious for trouble. Now however the tide of sympathy had turned. It might have been the pathetic look on the little man's face. It might have been the unpredictable reaction of a crowd to take sides with the underdog. Or on the other hand it might have been Sergeant Duff's domineering manner. Nobody likes a tough cop. Especially a crowd.

"Hey, take it easy with the little guy."

"Yeh, just because you're a Sergeant you don't have to get so tough with him!"

"These beat pounders are all alike!"

That was what did it. Duff could take a lot and ignore the rest. But that last crack was a little too much. He wheeled on the crowd.

"Who called me a beat pounder? Come on, which one of you is the wise guy!"

From somewhere in the back ranks of the crowd came a loud sizzling razzberry.

"Who did that! I'll run you in too—I'll run you *all* in! Get moving before I change my mind!"

Duff wheeled around. "And now for you, buddy—"

For a moment he stared in blank bewilderment. The little man was gone!

"Hah, hah! Copper! He got away from ya! He's half-way down the street already!"

Duff heard the jeer from the crowd and swept State street with his eyes. Sure enough, there was the little crook, suitcase and all, just opposite the Roosevelt Theatre. "Hey you, stop!" Duff shouted.

The little man kept on going.

Duff launched himself into the crowd, shouting and cursing. "Out of my way—stop you—hey!"

This time the crowd didn't part. It was like trying to break a brick wall with a rubber hammer as far as Duff was concerned. He pulled back from the milling mass of people, his face red and puffed angrily.

"You're obstructing justice, the whole lot of you! I've got a good notion to run you all in!"

Even as he spoke his eyes were searching the length of the street down past the Roosevelt Theatre. He could no longer see the little peddler man and his suitcase. He was gone.

"Why don't you run in the soap box, Sergeant?"

"Yeh, the soap box is still here!"

Duff switched furious eyes on the crowd. He would have really liked to be able to slap something on some of them—anyone of them. He knew it had all been his own fault letting them goad him on like that. He could have kicked his own pants for letting them get away with it. He knew they knew it and he could tell that they knew that he knew it. His face got redder.

"All right, break it up!" he said roughly. There was one consolation he knew, in having the last word. He was going to have it and have it fast. "Get moving—the show's over. Go on, you're blocking traffic!"

He turned his back on them then and stood staring out across State street. Behind him he could hear the crowd mumbling itself away and the sound of it made him feel better. They were all a bunch of ninnies. He had yet to see a crowd that wasn't.

Something caught his eye.

**D**OWN BY the curb, close beside the soap box, two little glints of yellow blazed up at him. He squinted his eyes and leaned over beside the gutter. Two golden pennies lay there.

"Hmmp! Gold pennies for copper ones!" Duff snorted. Then almost without thinking he picked them up off the street. "Who did he think he was kidding!" He looked at the pennies scornfully. Then he started to throw them back into the gutter. But he didn't. He shrugged contemptuously and dropped them into his coat pocket.

When he glanced around him again, the Loop traffic was back to normal. The afternoon crowds were scurrying around like mice on the edge of a giant cheesecake. Duff

straightened and drew in a big lungful of air. He exhaled the carbon monoxide, dust, smoke and more carbon monoxide, and sighed. "What I need is a drink."

Almost at once he began threading his way through the crowd toward Casey's Lounge, thinking wistfully that if it hadn't been for that little tramp he could already have downed a couple.

He was very thirsty.

"Hello, Casey."

Duff ambled up to the long mahogany bar and plunked his elbows on the smooth lacquered finish. Behind the bar, Casey was polishing glassware with a long white cloth.

Casey looked up and grinned. "Afternoon, Clarence. What's new in the police department?"

"Are you kidding?" Duff pushed his cap back with one hand and then crossed his arms and began drumming his Sergeant's stripes with both hands. His tongue was working its way along the outer edges of his lips. He glanced along the length of the bar fairly crowded with business men and afternoon shoppers grabbing a quick one. Duff had gotten past the point where he was self-conscious because of his uniform and the semi-strict rules of the force. He had a system.

He was using it now. Casey grinned, catching on.

"Pretty hot day, eh, Sarge? Makes a guy pretty thirsty."

Duff nodded absently. "Yeh. Sure wish I wasn't on duty. Give me a glass of water, like a pal."

Casey motioned to one of the two other barmen busy along the line. Moments later the barman came up with a glass. It was filled with what appeared to be water. Casey took it and placed it in front of Duff.

"Here's your glass of water, Sarge."

Duff unfolded his arms. "Thanks,

Casey." He took the glass and drained the gin in three quick gulps. He smacked his lips. "That hit the spot, Casey. Think maybe I'll have another."

Casey took the empty glass and went away. Beside Duff, a customer twisted around facing him, a tall glass of foaming beer in his hand.

"Afternoon, Sergeant. Sure is a hot day. Too bad you have to stick to water."

Duff looked into the grinning face with a big hooked nose and mild friendly black eyes. Up above the face there was a crown with a lot of sweat beads and nothing else. "Hello, Moe. How's the jewelry business?" Duff knew the water gag never fooled Moe.

"Oh, so-so. My business is pretty monotonous."

Duff nodded sympathetically.

"I'd gladly trade jobs with you, Moe," he said, turning back to the bar and to Casey who had arrived, grinning, with another glass of gin. "My business never gets monotonous. You, too, Casey. I think I'd like your kind of business even better. Yours is monotonous in a pleasant way." He picked up the glass and drank a little.

You don't have much to squawk about!" Casey laughed from behind his polishing cloth. "You've got stripes on your arm and a nice pension waiting for you. Besides, look at all the authority you can throw around."

Duff snorted. "Did you ever try and handle a Loop mob? You're nuts." He drank again. "Take this afternoon for instance."

Casey got interested and stopped polishing. "What about this afternoon? Somebody picking pockets again?"

Duff sighed. "Them tramps I can handle with my eyes shut. But you



should have been down at State and Madison a little while ago. Right smack on the corner a little shrimp with white hair and a suitcase was standing behind a soap box with a crowd huddled around blocking traffic, and here this tramp was speling a come-on about selling gold pennies for copper ones! The little—"

"Gold pennies? For copper ones?" Casey stopped grinning and frowned. "Who you trying to kid, Clarence?"

Duff sipped from his glass again. "I don't have to stand here and kid you, Casey. I said the bum was trying to sell gold pennies for copper ones. That's what I said and that's what I meant."

"Okay, okay. So he was trying to sell gold for copper. Why didn't you run him in? The guy belongs in a psycho ward."

Duff screwed up his face indignantly. "Don't you think I've got brains enough to know that? I was going to run him in. But the crowd started giving me the needle. Like a darn fool I fell for it and by the time I got back to the tramp, he was gone, suitcase and all. Authority, bell!"

**B**Y THIS time Moe had become interested. He set his glass of beer down on the bar and looked up at Duff.

"You said this guy was trying to sell gold pennies? What did they look like?"

"Just like any other penny, only they were yellow just like gold. Here, take a look for yourself. I picked up a couple he dropped in the gutter." He smacked them down on the bar.

Casey picked up one of them. He looked at it thoughtfully. "The guy sure is pretty slick. Must be a new kind of varnish. Doesn't feel like it though."

Duff nodded and glanced aside at Moe. The little jeweler had picked up the other penny and was squinting at it from the edge of his nose.

"What does it look like to you, Moe? Varnish or counterfeit?" Duff asked in a bored voice.

Moe didn't reply. He kept looking at the penny. It started creeping up the length of his nose as he looked more closely at it. Then suddenly his right hand dove into a pants pocket and came out holding a small jeweler's eyepiece. After it was screwed into place Moe looked at the penny again. He looked at it for a long time.

"Well!" Duff said. "You going to look at it all day?"

Moe didn't reply. He kept looking. There was a clink on the bar as Casey tossed his penny down. "Yeh, what's the matter, Moe?" Casey asked.

Moe took the penny away from his eye slowly. He took out the eyepiece and pocketed it. But he kept the penny clutched in his other hand. He still didn't say anything. Instead he picked up the glass of beer with his other hand and quickly drained it. Then he looked up at Duff.

"I don't know what kind of a joke this is, but if that little guy said these pennies were gold and wanted to sell them for copper ones, you missed a chance to get rich, Sergeant. They are gold!"

Duff leaned against the bar to keep from falling down. On the other side, Casey was having a hard time lifting his mouth back into place.

Moe began to grow excited. "Pure, solid gold! Off hand I'd say they were worth maybe ten or twelve dollars apiece..." He closed his mouth sharply and then regretfully spurted on. "Of course, I'd have to go through a lot of trouble turning them into cash—I'll give you eight dollars apiece for them!"

Duff stared off into space, his head buzzing with the word Gold! He saw the little white-haired man again, standing behind his soap box with the open suitcase and talking to him with watery blue eyes: *But I am not trying to defraud anybody! These are real gold pennies! I made them myself!*

"Gold! Clarence—where did you say that guy went?"

Duff shook his head and stared blankly across the bar at Casey. The bartender was leaning forward on fat flabby arms and his eyes were big and round as he stared at the penny lying on the bar. Duff scooped it up.

"I'll take that penny, Moe," he said to the jeweler. "It's evidence."

Moe looked hurt. "You mean you won't sell it to me?"

"Can't. It's evidence. Gotta go. Come on, give it to me."

Moe was reluctant, but handed the golden penny over. Duff took it gingerly and caressed it with a suddenly loving finger. His head was still buzzing. "See you boys later," he said.

Outside, Duff hurried back to State street. He edged over to the curbing and started down toward Randolph. At every intersection he stopped to ask the cop on foot duty about the little man and the suitcase. Every cop scratched his head and looked dumbly at Duff. They hadn't seen him. Nope, no little man with a suitcase. Why? Was something wrong? There were thousands of people walking around the Loop. They couldn't watch every one of them. Nope, ain't seen him. Sorry, Sarge.

Duff covered the Loop. He had never covered it before like he covered it now. He even went beyond the loop, up to Congress and Harrison. He even tried the flophouses and a couple of the ten-cent strip

outfits on South State. No little white-haired man. No suitcase. No gold pennies.

**H**E WENT on walking. His feet started aching in his shoes. No dice. In his pocket the two gold pennies started burning holes. He had to find him. He had to! *I make them myself!* There was a fortune waiting for him. All he had to do was find the tramp. A copper cent for ten bucks worth of gold!

He went on walking, down Dearborn to Randolph, over to Clark and back to Dearborn. No dice.

At six o'clock Duff gave up. He couldn't have walked another block for a ton of gold. He headed for the precinct station, already thinking of a cold bath and a bottle of Old Corcoran waiting at home...

The cold bath did a lot to help Duff's aching feet. Afterward he sat down in the small parlor of his three-room flat and sipped appropriate quantities of Old Corcoran. That did a lot toward soothing his mental condition. But that was something that was going to take a lot of soothing, Duff knew.

He poured himself another shot and brooded over it. The little guy was obviously a wack. But, Moe wasn't! And Moe had said the pennies were pure gold. Duff felt like kicking himself, but how was he supposed to know the stuff was real? And that crowd...

Somebody started knocking on his door.

Duff swore softly to himself and looked around for his shoes. They were a few feet away from the chair he was sprawled in. "Who is it?" he bawled out.

"Mrs. Clancy!" A gruff feminine voice bawled back. "Somebody downstairs asking for you!"

Duff got wearily to his feet. Mrs. Clancy was the landlady, and Duff

had long ago decided that she spent her time looking for a strategic moment to bother him. Like now when he wanted to sit and think.

"Well? Are you going to open up or not!"

Duff slid into his shoes trying to think of something sarcastic enough to say. He thought of something, but knew he couldn't say it in just the right words it needed, not even to Mrs. Clancy. Finally he opened the door.

"Hmmpf!" Mrs. Clancy, a buxom two-hundred pounds of solid Irish flesh which Duff knew was more muscle and bone than fat, stood squarely in the doorway behind a flowered apron. She was sniffing the air testily. "Drinking again!"

Duff checked an impulse to slam the door in her face. Instead he managed a wide smile. "Yes, very good stuff too. I intend to go right back to the bottle after you quit bothering me." He kept the smile on his face.

Mrs. Clancy put her hands on her hips, or rather, where Duff presumed her hips should have been. "Well I like that! Me bothering you! That's all the thanks I get for announcing a visitor to you!" She tilted her nose a few inches in the air. "I must say you pick strange people for friends—even for a *police-man*!"

Duff didn't fail to get the sarcasm on that last word. He ignored it with an effort. "You say I've got a visitor. What are you standing around here for then? And at least you'll admit that *I do* have friends!"

She turned away indignantly. "You can have the likes of him! And hereafter I'll trouble you to remember I'm running a respectable rooming house—I don't want tramps littering up my place!"

"Tramps?"

"Yes, tramps! Your Professor

Smith—that's who I mean!"

Duff stared after her and a frown crossed his face. Professor Smith? Was she nuts? He didn't know any Professor Smith...

**D**UFF LOOKED down the stairs and stiffened. He saw a white head and a little puffy face with a big nose. He saw a frayed leather suitcase, and—

"The guy with the pennies!" he yelled.

"Good evening, Sergeant." The little man chirped as he neared the head of the landing. Duff was too stunned to notice the high-pitched tone of anger in the little man's voice.

"Huh?" Duff muttered with his mouth open. All he could see was an avalanche of pure solid gold pennies starting to rain down on him out of a clear blue sky. It was fantastic, but there he was...

"I said, good evening," the little man repeated. "Don't try and run away—it won't do you any good. I've come for the money you stole from me!"

Duff came back to life. "Money? I stole?" For the first time he noticed the flashing anger in the watery blue eyes that stared up at him. Duff glanced quickly around the hall.

"Here, come inside my flat—we can't talk out in the hall!"

The little man looked suspiciously beyond the open door. Then slowly he followed Duff into the room. Duff slammed the door shut.

"Sit down!" Duff began rubbing his hands eagerly. "You know I tried to find you all afternoon! Where did you go to? I walked the Loop for hours—"

"You made it quite plain I wasn't desired," the little man piped. "And now about the money you stole..."

"What money? I didn't steal any money! About those golden pen-

nies—"

"That's exactly what I'm referring to. Either you give me back the two gold pennies you stole from me this afternoon—don't try to deny it, I saw you pick them up—or else pay me for them!"

"Pay you? You mean, you think I stole them from you?"

The little man turned his head indignantly and his chin performed a conga chain in the air. "That is exactly what I mean. I demand my two copper cents in payment—or else return my property to me!"

Duff tried to keep from choking as he rammed his fingers into the pile of small change in his pocket. He spilled the mass out on the table top and fumbled two copper cent pieces from among a pile of others.

"Here you are, Professor..." Duff handed the cent pieces to the little man. "I had no intention of stealing them—I was trying to find you so I could pay for them. Say, are you really a Professor?"

"Of course. I told the landlady my name."

"Yeh," Duff nodded. "Professor Smith." Then he frowned. "But how did you ever find me? You didn't even know my name."

"You are wrong. When you so rudely accosted me this afternoon you let it be known that no bums or vagrants would be tolerated in Sergeant Clarence Duff's district." The Professor got to his feet and pocketed the two copper pennies. "Well, I'll be going now."

"Wait!" Duff yelled jumping up. "You can't go now! We've got business to talk over!"

Professor Smith paused and stared along the length of his knobby nose quizzically. "Business? I don't believe so. We've completed our transaction."

Duff placed himself between the

Professor and the door. He pointed down at the suitcase. "We're only just starting, Professor. Have you got more of those gold pennies in that suitcase?"

"Naturally. But—"

"You want to sell them, don't you?"

"Why yes, yes, of course."

"They're sold. I'm buying them all. How many have you got with you?"

A pleased expression crossed the Professor's face. "Why, that is splendid! I had no idea you were that interested!"

**D**UFF STIFLED the cough that spluttered on his lips. He told himself he had to remain calm. He mustn't let the guy get cagy on him now and start raising the price. Imagine the crackpot asking him if he was interested! With a fortune staring him in the face was he interested?

"How many have you got with you?" Duff asked casually.

The Professor plopped himself down on a chair and slipped the straps open on the suitcase. He opened it and Duff found himself staring at neat rows of cardboard cards on which gleaming golden pennies were stuck. As near as Duff could determine there were hundreds of them.

"I think I have five hundred in this batch," the Professor said after studying the cards for a moment. "Do you want them all?"

Duff didn't trust his voice so he made a dive for his pocketbook. Five hundred gold pennies at a cent a crack was five bucks. Five bucks for a fortune in gold!

"Here you are, Professor—five dollars. That ought to cover it." Duff proffered a five-dollar bill at the little man.

The professor looked up in sur-

prise. "What's that? Paper? You're trying to give me paper for my pennies? Oh, no!"

Duff frowned. "But Professor, this is a five-dollar bill! You said yourself you wanted a cent apiece for them—well—"

"That's exactly what I want. A cent apiece. One copper cent for each of my gold ones. I can't use paper in making them, I must have copper. I'm sorry, I'd better go now."

Duff stared at him blankly for a moment. The whole thing was too screwy for him to figure out. But one thing he was certain of. The Professor wasn't going out of his life just like that.

"O.K., O.K., Professor. Just take it easy. If you want copper pennies, you'll get copper pennies. Just a minute!"

Duff scurried over to the table where he had piled his change. He scooped up the mass of pennies, dimes and nickels and sorted them with trembling fingers. When he had finished he had a small pile of copper cent pieces in his hand. He compared that small pile with the five hundred gold ones and shook his head. "Wait till I look around the flat—I've got some more some place!"

The Professor waited. Moments later Duff hurried back with another small pile of copper. He sat down at the table and counted the mass.

"One hundred," he said dejectedly. "That's all I've got."

"One hundred? Why that is splendid! I'll sell you a hundred gold pennies right now!"

Duff watched with greedy eyes as the little man began plucking gold pennies from the cards. Soon he had the hundred in a small pile. "Give me the copper ones," he said, making sure Duff didn't get his hands on the gold ones first.

Duff handed the copper pennies to

the Professor. He got the gold ones in exchange. Then he sat staring at them in his hand, feeling their comfortable weight registering through him at thirty-five dollars an ounce.

Across from him the Professor had already closed the suitcase. He was getting up. "Do you think you might be interested in buying more at a later date?" he asked.

Duff looked up from the golden pennies in his hand. He saw the Professor about to head for the door, his chin flopping loosely against his coat front.

"Just a minute!" Duff exclaimed. "You can't leave me now! We've got to make an agreement!"

"Agreement?" The little man peered down his nose.

"Yes!" Duff pointed at the pennies in his hand. "You want to continue selling them, don't you? Well, I'll buy all you can bring me—but I want *all* of them—understand?"

The Professor set down his suitcase and started running long thin fingers through his hair. "Hmm. This is really interesting. Do you mean I won't have to stand on street corners anymore?"

Duff got to his feet. Eagerness was written across his face in bold capital letters. "That's exactly what I mean—we'll become partners—you supply the gold pennies and I'll supply all the copper ones!"

Professor Smith sighed. "This is almost too good to be true. I've been getting pretty discouraged trying to get people to buy my pennies. Everybody laughs at me and walks away. They just don't believe they are gold. But you know they are gold, don't you?"

**D**UFF LOOKED into the watery blue eyes and managed to keep his face composed. All along he knew the time would come when he would

have to ask this question. Now as he looked into the little man's face he tried to figure him out before asking the question. Didn't gold mean anything to this man? Or was it some fantastic racket being operated for a hidden purpose? If so, what possible reason could there be for anyone giving gold pennies for comparatively worthless copper ones? He couldn't figure it out, so he stopped trying.

"Look, Professor," Duff began slowly. "There's a couple of things I'd like to know. First, just where do you get these gold pennies—I know you said before you make them, but let's cut out the clowning now."

The little man stared at Duff in a surprised way. "Why I wasn't trying to fool you—or anyone. I do make them... That is, I that was it."

Aha! Help! So that was it. There was more than one guy in the racket. Well, he had expected as much. Duff narrowed his eyes.

"Just who helps you, Professor? How many are in on it?"

"Why, why *they* help, I mean I help—them..."

"Who is them?" Duff demanded.

The Professor shook his head. "I can't tell you anything more. They wouldn't like it. I had a hard time finding them to start with. It took me years... Now I've got the machine..."

"Machine? What machine?"

"Why the machine where the pennies are made... I've got to go now." He picked up the suitcase and headed for the door.

"Wait a minute!" Duff exclaimed. "You haven't told me where I can reach you! Give me your address."

"Address? Oh, no, I can't do that... Don't worry, I'll come back. I'll be back tomorrow night. I hope you won't back out of our agreement. You will have the copper pennies for me?"

Duff debated a little mental third degree. It would be easy to hold the Professor, but the house was probably being watched by the rest of the gang. What did he have to lose by playing ball—at least for the present.

"I'll have them, Professor. Bring as many gold ones as you can carry."

"I will. Good night."

Duff watched him toddle away down the stairs and was reminded once again of a dwarf from a Walt Disney short. Long after the Professor had gone Duff continued to look down the stairs in puzzled thought. Finally he turned back into his room.

The little pile of golden pennies on the table drew him like a magnet. He sat beside the table and stared at them. "At ten bucks a penny, that's one thousand smackers..." he gloated. His lips smacked in harmony with the words. Then he remembered the Old Corcoran.

Duff spent a very pleasant night.

AT TWO o'clock sharp, just as the guard was closing the doors, Sergeant Clarence Duff walked into the Third National Bank of Chicago. He had hurried up LaSalle street from his prowling district at State and Madison. The guard nodded gruffly.

"Hello, Sergeant. Just closing, better hurry up."

Duff walked past him with a quick nod. In his right hand he carried a small bulky paper bag.

To the left side of the room ran a long line of teller cages. Most of them were already empty as the bank prepared to close. Duff strode over to number five where a depositor was just pocketing his account book and walking away. Duff laid the paper bag on the sill of the cage and peered through the bars. The teller looked up from a ledger book.

"Yes? Can I help you?"

Duff pulled out his pocket book.

"I want ten rolls of pennies. Copper ones." He laid a ten-dollar bill in front of him.

The teller smiled, showing a nice set of buck teeth. "Yes sir. Right away. And they'll be copper all right since that's the only kind Uncle Sam makes."

Duff ignored the joke. He waited until the teller shoved ten rolls of pennies through the cage and put away the ten-dollar bill. Then he pushed the paper bag through.

"I want to cash these in. At thirty-five dollars an ounce. I figure there's about a thousand bucks worth."

The teller picked up the bag and looked back at Duff. "Thirty five dollars an ounce? Ounce of what?"

"Gold," Duff replied pointing to the bag.

The teller started to smile condescendingly, but his smile vanished when he emptied the little bag of its contents. A bright glittering mass of golden pennies tinkered on the counter. The teller's eyes started bulging.

"Wha—what's this?"

Duff let a satisfied grin cross his face. "Just what it looks like. Gold. Weigh it up and pay me."

The teller didn't seem to hear Duff. He was running his fingers through the mass of pennies, getting his face closer to them as if he couldn't get close enough without touching them.

"Gold? Gold? Gold pennies? Impossible..." he muttered.

Duff snorted. "Look, bud, you don't have to take my word for it. Get somebody who knows gold to examine them. Come on, I haven't got all day!"

The teller licked his buck teeth with a nervous tongue. Then he reached over to a set of buttons. He pressed one.

"Where did you get these pennies?" he asked Duff.

"Do I ask you where you get

yours?"

"But these—"

He broke off as a short, plump, bald-headed man in a tight-fitting blue serge suit waddled up behind him.

"You rang for me, Jenkins?"

"Yes, I did, Mister Blong. This man," he pointed at Duff, "brought these pennies in. He says they are gold and wants—"

"Gold? Hah, hah! What's the joke?"

Duff snorted outside the cage. "Look, fatso, would you know gold if you saw it?"

Mister Blong straightened up indignantly. "Sir, did I hear you address me as—"

"Forget it," Duff sighed. "I asked you if you knew gold."

"Of course! Certainly I do. As metallurgist for the bank I know every valuable metal!"

"Then take a look at those," Duff pointed.

The fat man shoved the teller aside and peered at the mass of pennies. His face started to go slack. With quick fingers he picked up one of the pennies and stared at it.

"Well?" Duff demanded. "What about it?"

Blong stared from Duff to the teller. Then: "I'll be back in a few minutes, Jenkins—this is amazing!" He started to hurry off. "Where are you going with that penny?" Duff yelled after him.

The teller answered for him. "He's going to test it. Probably with acids. Sergeant, if this is some kind of a trick you'll be getting yourself into serious trouble!"

"Trick! Do I look like a fool?"

The teller looked away quickly to keep from answering. Duff glared at him for a moment, then lit a cigarette.

He was crushing the stub on the

floor when the fat man waddled back up the aisle behind the cage. His features were slack with awe.

"Jenkins, how many of these—these pennies are there?"

There was something in the fat man's voice that started Jenkins counting in a hurry. Duff just looked on, enjoying the scene.

"With the one you have, sir, a hundred."

"I could have told you that," Duff added.

Jenkins ignored Duff. "What did you find, Mister Blong? They are copper, aren't they?"

Blong shook his head with the manner of a man who has seen everything in his chosen field and suddenly becoming aware that he needs another pair of eyes to see more.

"No, Jenkins. It's gold all right. I gave it every form of the acid test, just as a formality. I knew it was gold when I first saw it."

Jenkins licked his buck teeth. "But, that's impossible! There are no gold pennies in circulation!"

"That may be. But these are gold! I'll stake my reputation on it."

Duff banged on the sill. "Say, how about hurrying up—I haven't got all day I told you before! Weigh them up and pay me."

The teller looked at Blong for guidance. The fat man just shrugged.

"I, I'm sorry, but I'll have to get permission on this. Just a moment." He reached over to the buttons again and Duff watched him press one with the tag: Vice-President.

Moments later a tall, well-dressed man with a thin sensitive nose and thick-lensed glasses, walked up.

"Yes? You wanted me, Jenkins?" He stared down his glasses and along his nose at the teller.

Jenkins nodded and burst into a babble about the pennies. When he had finished the vice-president picked up one of the pennies, stared at it

frowning for a long moment, then looked across at Blong.

Blong started bobbing his head vigorously. "They are gold, sir. I gave one of them the acid test thoroughly. It's a noble metal all right..."

Duff was getting tired of this. "Look," he said, "gold is worth around thirty-five dollars an ounce. Those pennies are gold. Just weigh them up and give me my money. You can argue about it later!"

The teller looked to the vice-president. The vice-president looked at the penny, back to the teller, and then scratched his head. "This is most irregular—in all my experience as a banker I've never seen a gold penny! I, I—I better call Mister Sloane, the President..."

Duff started chewing his lips angrily. This could go on all day from the looks of things. If they called any more guys they could start a convention. He watched the vice-president using the phone.

Mister Sloane, President of Third National Bank was an old stoop-shouldered geezer, Duff didn't like the first moment he saw him. He had thin white hair and a long, pointed wrinkled face with close-set hard grey eyes. He looked like a vulture that was too old and stubborn to die and probably never would. He stalked up to the teller's cage.

Duff listened with bored ears as the tale was repeated to the president. Finally when it was over and Blong had added his steadfast assurance about the metal's genuineness, Duff tried once more.

"Mister Sloane. I've been very patient. Naturally I realize that you have to take every precaution before paying out money, but surely you're satisfied now?" It was a longer, calmer, and more dignified speech than Duff was accustomed to making. He surprised himself.



Sloane picked up one of the pennies and then looked at Duff. "I'm satisfied that these pennies are gold, fantastic as it seemed at first. What I am not satisfied about is where you got them and how?"

"Where I got them is my business," Duff shot back. "All you have to know is that they are real gold. You know that. Now pay me!"

Jenkins cleared his throat apprehensively. "Shall I pay him, Mister Sloane?"

The bank president looked for another long moment at the penny, then suddenly brightened. "By all means, Jenkins. This is United States currency. We have to pay him."

"I'll have it weighed in a few minutes," Jenkins said.

Sloane waved his hand. "That won't be necessary, Jenkins. If there are hundred pennies there, give the Sergeant a dollar bill."

"What!" Duff roared. "A dollar bill? Are you crazy—there's a good thousand dollar's worth of gold there!"

Sloane nodded, smiling. "I am well aware of that. But I am also well aware of the fact that these pennies *are* pennies! They are worth exactly what the United States mint has stamped on them—regardless of the metals that are used in their manufacture. In this case, they are made of gold but are stamped plainly *one cent*."

"Give the Sergeant a dollar, Jenkins."

Duff started pounding on the cage. "Oh, no you don't! You think you can get away with that and fill your own pockets! Either you give me the value of that gold or give me back my pennies!"

Sloane shook his head, still smiling. "I can't give them back to you, Sergeant. Aren't you aware that the government called in all outstanding gold coins? You have to turn them in—

that's the law. And all I can give you for them is their face value. If I gave you any more I would be violating the law myself." He turned to Jenkins who was standing with his mouth open, too stunned to even lick his teeth. "Give the Sergeant a dollar bill, Jenkins."

Jenkins pulled a dollar bill from his drawer and shoved it through the opening.

Duff's face was puffed red with fury. "You can't do this to me! I'll swear out a warrant, I'll get the D.A! I'll sue you! I'll—"

Sloane stopped smiling. "And I'll call in the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Maybe you'd like to do some explaining to them?"

Duff choked back the rest of his words. He was licked and he knew it. Sloane had been too smart. And the worst of it was, Duff knew, that he was right. The pennies did say one cent. That was all they were worth, even though they were made of gold! A cold, sick feeling spread through Duff's stomach.

"Well, Sergeant?" Sloane was smiling again.

Duff looked at him in defeat. Slowly he picked up the dollar bill and slipped it into his pocket beside the rolls of pennies.

He could feel the banker's eyes laughing at him as he strode wearily away.

CASEY'S Lounge was enjoying a field day. The bar was packed from one end to the other, and at some places they were standing two deep. It began to look like he wouldn't even be able to get his usual gin bracer. And Duff needed it now like he had never needed it.

"Hey, Clarence!"

Duff turned toward the tables and booths off to the left. In one of the booths, Moe, the jeweler, was sitting, a huge stein of beer foaming in front

of him. Duff walked over.

"Hello, Moe."

Moe frowned at him "What's the matter with you? Sick?"

Duff slid into the seat opposite Moe. He shook his head. "I need a drink, Moe. Order me a glass of water."

Moe fingered a waiter over and pointed to Duff. The waiter scurried away.

Moe looked closely at Duff. "Listen, Clarence, I've been doing some thinking since yesterday afternoon—about those gold pennies you picked up..."

Duff snorted across the table. "Don't mention those pennies to me again, Moe, I'm sick of them!"

Moe sipped slowly on his beer. "I was only going to say that with the right setup, if you could find that tramp and his suitcase, well, I could help you make a pile of dough."

This sounded very funny to Duff. "Hah! Don't make me laugh. I wish I had sold the things to you yesterday when I had the chance. Do you want to know something? Well I had a whole hundred of the things today! I had a good thousand buck's worth of solid gold right in my mitt!"

Moe choked over his beer. "What? A hundred of them? You mean you found the guy with the suitcase?"

"Yeh, I found, him, and a lot of good it did me! Do you know what those pennies are worth to a bank? They're worth exactly what's stamped on them—one cent! Hah! It's the funniest thing I ever heard, a hundred solid gold pennies worth only a buck! That's what I got, a buck!"

Moe shoved his stein of beer aside excitedly. "Look, Clarence, that's what I meant to tell you—I thought of that last night and I've got a way to get around it!"

Duff had turned his head away watching the waiter come up with a glass of gin. He switched his gaze

back sharply. "What did you say?"

"I said I know a way to get around that. If I hadn't been so surprised at seeing a gold penny yesterday afternoon I would have thought about the value angle right then. Look, how about you and me making a deal?"

Duff took a long pull at the gin, then looked interestedly at the jeweler. "What do you mean, a way around it?"

Moe spread his hands on the table. "Look, Sergeant, I am a business man. When I say I can make both of us a fortune, I am not just talking. But I want to make a deal first. What do you say?"

Duff felt hope start pounding inside him. Secretly he didn't trust Moe any farther than he could throw a truck, but what did he have to lose? He could get all the pennies he needed, and that didn't mean very much right now with guys like Sloane holding the trump cards. Duff sighed.

"What kind of a deal do you mean, Moe?"

"Fifty-fifty. That's fair. And I'm going to have to do most of the work. How about it?"

Duff did some rapid mental figuring. Even at fifty percent he could make thousands. "Okay Moe, it's a deal. We'll split the profits. Now what's the sketch?"

**M**OE TOOK his hands off the table and started rubbing them. "All we got to do is melt the pennies down into lumps or bricks or fancy ornaments. I can do that. Then I'll handle the peddle angle. Some of it we'll convert through banks, others we can hit dealers and high class jewelry outfits with. That's my special end. We don't want the government nosing around too close. Simple!"

Duff licked his lips. "Why didn't I think of that!" he muttered.

Moe shook his finger warningly.

"Don't forget *I* thought of it, and besides, you being a copper, you can't let yourself get involved openly. As a jeweler I handle gold every day. "Not in quantities like what we plan to do, but still I know my way around."

Duff nodded. "It sounds good, Moe. It sounds good! The little guy is bringing me another batch—I got ten rolls of copper cent pieces in my pocket!"

"That's something else we ought to talk about, Clarence," Moe said, "Just who is this guy and where does he get the gold?"

"I'd like to know that myself. He's as tight as a clam about it. I tried to pump him, but no soap. All I know is that he's got some kind of a machine that makes them. He calls himself Professor Smith."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"No. I told you he's a cagy guy."

Moe frowned. "I wonder what his game is? He can't make anything trading copper pennies for gold ones!"

"That's exactly what I figure. Either there's a gang working some angle we haven't thought of yet, or else the guy is just plain nuts. Anyway, he's got the gold, that's enough for me."

Moe rubbed his chin. "If that's the case, this Smith may decide to quit giving us the gold—or else raise the price. We got to make sure he doesn't get the chance..."

Duff frowned. "I don't get you."

"It's simple, Clarence. What we've got to do is get that machine. Then we won't depend on this Smith. We'll be rich!"

"Yeh, but what about this Smith? He can stir up some trouble for us."

"Not if he isn't around. Get me? With him out of the way, we'll have clear sailing. Clarence, the guy is just a tramp—nobody would miss him!"

Duff looked long and hard at Moe.

The jeweler's words burned through him. Duff knew what he meant. He meant murder. It wasn't a nice sounding word. Duff didn't like it, but the more he thought of the gold pennies, the better he liked them. And anyway, Moe was right. If they didn't do something to get that machine, the tramp might check them off, pfft!

Duff sipped at his gin. "There might be an angle to that, Moe. Smith said something about some other guys. If it's a racket I'll be working inside the law by breaking it up. If some of them get hurt, well..."

Moe bobbed his head. "That's the ticket, Clarence. A chance like this comes only once in a lifetime! I've got a panel body delivery truck. When you find out where this machine is and get the coast clear, we'll take it away. When will you see this guy again?"

"Tonight, I think. He said he'd be around. I'll tail him and you be ready with that truck. I'll phone you."

They both smiled and clinked their glasses together.

"I'll be waiting," Moe said.

DUFF WAS pacing the length of his small living room as dusk settled outside the windows. On the table beside his lounge chair, the bottle of Old Corcoran was open and in sad need of refilling. An ash tray beside it was stacked with cigarette butts. Duff was puffing on a new one as he paced.

"Maybe the guy won't come," he muttered. "I should have followed him last night when I had the chance!" Duff dragged nervously at his cigarette and headed for the Old Corcoran. Her drained the last of it into a glass and then drained the glass.

As he did so he heard steps on the stairs outside his door. Then a sudden knock. He nearly dropped the glass getting to the door.

Mrs. Clancy stared in at him, sniffing the air. "Hmmm! Trying to burn the house down? And drinking again!"

Duff glared out at her. "Thank God I won't have to take your lip very much longer!"

She glared back at him. "Oh, threatening to move again?"

"No. Just telling you. You've got my week's notice right now."

Her nose lifted suspiciously. "And where might I ask will you go? Not that I give one personal hoot—"

"I'm getting an apartment on Lake Shore Drive," Duff sneered at her. "I'm tired of living in a dump like this."

"Dump, is it! Why you cheap shanty Irish cop! You've never been able to keep your rent up here—let alone Lake Shore Drive. Hah! You talk like you've just inherited a gold mine!"

Duff caught the taunting sarcasm and managed to smile. "Maybe I did. Wouldn't you like to know?"

She turned away stiffly. "That settles it. You'll move whether you want to or not. Thank God I don't have to announce your tramp guests anymore!"

She waddled on down the stairs and Duff saw a little figure standing uncertainly on the lower landing. It was the Professor. He was standing looking up, his suitcase held in both hands before him.

"Professor!" Duff called down excitedly. "Come on up, I've been waiting for you!"

The Professor came up and Duff closed the door of his flat after him. He looked from the little man to the suitcase he had set down on the floor.

"Did you bring them? How many? I'll take all you've got!"

Professor Smith rubbed the end of his knobby nose. "Good evening. I'm sorry if I'm a little late. I had to

get permission to go out tonight. Yes, I've got a nice shiny new batch. I think around eight hundred—are you sure you want them all?"

Duff nodded eagerly, then frowned. "What did you say about being later? Permission from whom?"

The little man shrugged and his beard rippled across his coat. "Oh, it is nothing, really. Oswald says I've been going around too much. I probably won't see you again for some time. Have you got enough copper pennies for my gold ones?"

Duff continued to frown and was about to ask further questions when the Professor opened the suitcase. Hundreds of carded gold pennies stared out at him. He gulped hungrily and hurried for the stacked rolls of copper pennies on a table beside the window.

"Here you are, Professor!" He picked up eight of the rolls. Eight hundred pennies. I got them from the bank this morning."

The little man bobbed his head happily. "Splendid! You know, even if I can't see you for awhile, this batch will keep them satisfied until I can get out again! Here, help me take them off the cards."

Duff frowned as he helped the Professor pull off the gold pennies and stack them on the floor. "What do you mean you won't be able to come anymore? You aren't backing out of our agreement, are you?"

The little man laughed. "Dear me, no! I assure you that I'll give you first choice, but well, Oswald is rather difficult at times."

"Who is Oswald?" Duff demanded suspiciously.

"Oswald? Why he runs the place. Rather difficult man at times."

Duff got to his feet. "So! There is a gang of you! Come on, what's the racket, Professor? Did this Oswald build the machine?"

THE PROFESSOR closed the suitcase after putting in the eight rolls of copper pennies. Then he straightened laughing. "Oswald build the machine? Dear me, but that is funny! He doesn't even believe it works, let alone build it!"

It was all over Duff's head, a tangle of words that said a lot and yet said nothing. This little guy who called himself Professor Smith had a machine which made gold pennies from copper ones. And yet it wasn't exactly his machine. And Oswald—whoever he was—didn't want the little guy running around. And Oswald knew about the machine and didn't believe it worked. And *they* were satisfied...

"Professor," Duff pleaded, "why don't you try talking sense?"

The little man frowned. "I believe I have made myself sufficiently explicit. There is nothing left to say. I will see you again, I hope."

Duff tried once more. "Listen, Professor, if you can't make it over here anymore why don't you let me work the machine for you? I could bring it here and—"

Smith was indignant. "I should say not! You're trying to steal it from me, I can tell! I should have known better than to trust you in the first place. Goodbye!"

He went for the door. Duff felt his fingers itching to grab him, to pound some sense into the old fool. But he let the professor go. He even waited until he heard the street door slam downstairs. Then he gave the .38 special revolver a pat on his hip.

There was a grim smile around his mouth when he left the flat.

IT WASN'T hard to follow him even in the evening shadows. Duff kept his coupe close behind the Clark street trolley on which the professor had climbed minutes before. Duff

had his plans all set. He would find the professor's hangout, case the joint, then, if it looked safe, step in, give the little guy a fast one, call Moe, and then beat it with the machine. It would be that simple. Nobody could possibly connect him with the professor. In all probability nobody would even try and run the case down. Of course there was always the chance that this guy Oswald might get in the way. And maybe the others... Duff shook his head. It was more than he could figure out and anyway the professor was the one he wanted.

The Clark street trolley stopped at the Irving Park intersection and Duff grew alert as he saw the little guy slip off the car and walk toward the Irving Park westbound safety island. He pulled his coupe over to the curb and waited. In the darkness there was no possibility of the professor seeing him, let alone recognizing him.

Moments later Duff saw the professor board a westbound Irving car. Duff followed close behind the street-car.

He had never realized how slow the trolleys went. It seemed like hours were passing as he followed along behind it. Every once in awhile Duff stared out the side window to get a glimpse of the street numbers. They were already in 60 hundreds west when Duff saw the professor alight and stand on the safety island. Duff pulled to the curb a half block away and waited.

The little man started walking north down a side street off Irving. Duff put his car in second gear and crawled along behind him, his lights dimmed. In the middle of the block the professor turned into an iron gateway. Duff fixed the place and parked. A smile spread over his face there in the darkness. He had found the house. Just give him a minute to get inside now.

Duff finally left his coupe and walked on up the block. For the most part it was an undeveloped section. Only a few houses were scattered around and most of these on the east side of the street. The professor had gone into a gate that was part of a long iron fence stretching down the street. Tall cottonwood trees bordering the street curb hid the house from view from where he was walking on the other side. When he finally crossed over, Duff got a shock.

He was looking at a series of square brick buildings enclosed in the iron fencing. They were all two stories high and connected with one story narrow passageways. Outside lights hung over each passageway and at the front of what was obviously the main building, a single light illuminated the sign:

**THE JEREMIAH OSWALD REST  
HOME AND SANATORIUM**

"Jumping Gods!" Duff wheezed out. "A nut house!"

**M**ANY THINGS suddenly smoothed out as far as Duff was concerned. He saw the answers to most of the questions that had been bothering him. No wonder the little guy acted screwy—he was a screw! And that guy Oswald, of course! Oswald was the warden or whatever they called these nut overseers! And best of all, Oswald didn't believe the machine worked! And those *others* that Smith kept harping on. This was going to be too easy. A little old goof with mental delusions and a warden who knew he was as nutty as a pecan tree. Hah!

Duff pushed open the gate and walked in. When he got to the doorway he hunted around until he found the bell. He pushed it.

While he waited, Duff brushed his arm across his star, polishing it up. With the three stripes on his sleeve he didn't figure on much trouble from

Oswald.

The door opened. A woman in a white nurse's uniform stared out at him.

"Yes? Oh, a police officer! Is there anything wrong?"

Duff put on his best diplomatic manner. "I'd like a word Mister Oswald. Official business."

The nurse stared. "Of course. It's a little late, but the doctor is still in his office. Will you step this way?"

Duff entered, followed the nurse down a long corridor. He noticed there were doors on either side of the hall, and each door had a lock on the outside and a window at the top. Most of them had bars.

"In here."

Duff followed the nurse into a well furnished anteroom. He waited while she walked to a door and knocked. Moments later the door opened and Duff looked at a tall stoop-shouldered man with light gray hair, a long thin face, and pinch glasses. The man frowned as he saw Duff.

"Yes, Miss Skinner?"

The nurse pointed to Duff. "This police sergeant wants to see you, doctor—on official business."

Doctor Oswald raised his eyebrows. "Oh? Won't you come in, Sergeant?"

Duff walked into the office and looked around. It was well fitted out with a thick oriental rug, comfortable leather chairs, a big oak desk, well filled book cases, and a leather divan by the window.

"Please sit down, officer. What can I do for you?"

Duff sat down and pulled out a cigarette. He lit it and stared across at Oswald. The doctor had settled himself behind his desk and was sitting with his fingers bowed like a praying mantis.

"Do you have anybody here by the name of Professor Smith?" Duff asked.

The doctor's face brightened and grew sad in almost the same instant, it seemed to Duff. "Professor Smith? Oh, yes! Tsk, tsk, a sad case." He shook his head, then frowned. "Why, is anything the matter?"

Duff ignored the question. "Who is this Smith, doctor?"

Oswald let out a sigh. "He was once a very brilliant man. Quite a pathetic case. His field was physics and metallurgy. An odd combination even for a scientist. He was quite brilliant for a time, contributing a number of advances in both fields at the University of Illinois. But," Oswald shook his head sadly, "like all men who delve too deeply he couldn't stand the strain. He began to contact strange hidden voices that started to run his life. A sad case. He had money and his wife decided to commit him to a rest home. Poor woman, she died a year ago.

"I have carried him on here out of pity more than anything else. You see, when his wife died, the money stopped coming in for his care. I have tried to keep from sending him over to Dunning, but..."

Duff nodded, understandingly. Inside he felt like laughing. This was going to be duck soup!

"Doctor Oswald, I understand this Professor Smith has some kind of machine..."

Oswald raised his eyes questioningly. "How do you know about that? And while I'm on the subject, just what is your purpose in inquiring about Smith?"

DUFF TAPPED his cigarette on a desk ash tray. "Well, it seems that this professor caused a disturbance in the Loop and kept babbling about some kind of machine. That's why I'm out here, to investigate."

Oswald laughed. "Oh, I see! Well I can assure you, Sergeant that there is nothing dangerous about it. You

see, the professor is perfectly harmless, but he likes to tinker around. So I let him build whatever machines take his fancy. He has one that is supposed to transmute copper into gold through what he calls, a *fourth dimensional time world warp*. He has the mania that beings are directing him in his research. You can see that his mind is sorely affected. Naturally, it is all in his head, the whole business. But I let him tinker around anyway."

Duff kept a sober face and tried to keep a smirk of satisfaction from his eyes. "He certainly is a nut all right."

"Oh, now, I wouldn't call him that, Sergeant. Let us just say that he has certain, er, mental peculiarities. All harmless of course."

"Is that why you let him run around the streets with a suitcase?"

Oswald smiled, adjusting his pinch glasses to a tighter hold on his nose. "That is it, exactly. But I do believe he has been out too much of late. His obsessions are growing. I will have to restrict him for awhile, sort of cool him off..."

Duff decided that this was the psychological moment. He stepped in boldly. "Doctor, this machine interests headquarters. Whether or not it is a fake—and of course I realize that it is—nevertheless, you know how police business works. We can't ignore anything out of the ordinary. I wonder if it would be possible for me to take it down to headquarters for an examination? It will be returned of course."

Oswald sat forward in his chair frowning. "That is rather an irregular request. But I see no reason why it cannot be arranged. It may be rather difficult convincing the professor, however..."

Duff sat forward. "I think I can arrange that if you'll let me talk to him. You see, for some reason the old

boy took a liking to me and told me all about it."

Oswald looked surprised. "Really? Well that should help matters considerably. You understand, I wouldn't want to do anything that might upset my patients. The mind, you know."

Duff said that he did. Then Oswald got up and ambled his lean frame around the desk.

"If you will follow me sergeant."

**D**UFF FOLLOWED him, mentally rubbing his hands, thinking what a cinch of a deal this had turned out to be. There would be no necessity for violence now. Duff also couldn't help thinking what a sap this guy Oswald was. The guy had a fortune resting right under his nose and he didn't know it!

Oswald was walking down the long corridor of the building. Duff followed close behind him. At the end of the corridor they turned into one of the connecting passageways between buildings. Finally the doctor paused before one of the doors along the side of the corridor. He opened it and motioned Duff inside.

It was a large square room. The walls were all white, there was a bed in one corner, two chairs ranged alongside it, another small door on the opposite wall that was partly open revealing a lavatory, and in the center of the room was Professor Smith.

He was standing before a huge round table upon which sat the strangest conglomeration of wires and coils and metal bulges that Duff had ever seen. At one end of the affair was a large spout-like tube that could have been the opening of a vacuum cleaner, only Duff had never seen a vacuum cleaner with an opening a man could have crawled into. At the other end was a similar tube, but smaller.

"Good evening, professor," Oswald was saying. "I've brought you a vis-

itor."

The Professor was staring at Duff with wide, shocked blue eyes. He darted around the front of the machine and spread his arms wide, as if he were afraid of a concerted rush on the machine.

"You! Where did you come from? What do you want?"

Duff nudged the doctor. "Let me talk to him for a few minutes."

Oswald shrugged. "I'll be waiting outside. Try not to upset him."

Duff waited until the doctor had closed the door behind him. Then he walked toward the professor.

"Stop! You've come to steal my machine—I know!"

Duff stopped. "Don't get all excited, professor. I only want to have a little talk with you."

"Talk? We have nothing to talk about? This wasn't in our agreement!"

Duff started to walk around the table to get closer to the machine, but the little man bobbed around with him, keeping him away from the machine.

"Look, professor, I really am interested in your machine. What I want to know is how it works, just how you make these gold pennies out of copper ones. After all, I do believe you—and Oswald doesn't."

The professor shook his head. "They wouldn't like it. Only I have the secret and I promised not to tell! They have been nice to me, giving me gold for copper. They need copper all kinds of it..."

Duff decided it was no use. The guy was really a crackpot all right, even though he had invented a machine to make gold. There was only one thing to do, take the thing by force.

"Look, professor, I'm here to take the machine along with me. You have no use for it, and anyway, you can build another one if you want to. Doc-



tor Oswald agrees with me. Now get out of the way."

Duff started to advance. But the little man grabbed a hammer from a mass of tools and started waving it around over his head.

"Stay away! I'll hit you! Stay away!"

Duff snorted angrily: "Put that down, you fool! Are you forgetting I represent the law? As a copper I can do anything—"

"COPPER?" the little man interrupted Duff's words. "Did you say copper?"

Duff paused as he saw a blank expression cross the professor's face. Slowly he nodded. "That's what I said. And don't forget it. I'm a copper and I can make plenty of trouble if I have to!"

The little man lowered the hammer. His blue watery eyes were very wide and very staring. To Duff it seemed as if the goof was trying to look right through him.

"Yes, yes, of course!" the little man breathed. "I should have thought of it before. Of course you are a copper...lots of copper." He moved closer to Duff, and unconsciously the policeman backed up. "Tell me, copper, how much do you weigh?"

"Huh?" Duff frowned. What gave now? Why was the little guy suddenly so friendly? And why did he ask about his weight?

"How much do you weigh?"

Duff decided he had nothing to lose by humoring him. "About one-ninety, I guess. But what—?"

"One hundred and ninety pounds!" The professor gloated, rubbing his fingers together. "That is splendid! I've never had that much before! They will be very pleased!"

"What are you talking about?" Duff demanded.

The professor smiled. "You wanted to find how to work the machine,

didn't you? Well I'm going to show you!"

Duff relaxed. Hah, he had done it after all. The little guy was eating out of his hand. "That's swell, professor. What do we do first?"

The professor reached forward and took Duff by the hand. He pulled around the table to where a set of controls and dials were set in the side of the machine.

"First we've got to regulate the intake. See—we turn this knob to a hundred and ninety.... Then we turn these dials here, and then we're ready to start!"

Duff tried to disengage his hand but the little man had a tight grip on it. He started pulling Duff around the table. They ended up before the large spout that had reminded Duff of a giant vacuum cleaner.

"This is where we put the copper in," he told Duff.

Duff nodded and pointed with his free hand to the other end of the machine. "And that is where it comes out?"

The professor bobbed his head vigorously. "Yes, yes. That is where the gold comes from after the change has been made by them!"

Duff snorted to himself. He tried to pull his fingers away again, and failed. He looked down at the little man. "What now, professor?"

"Now we are ready to begin. You stick your hand in there," he pointed to the vacuum cleaner opening. "Go ahead, I'm trying to operate it for you. It is quite simple."

Duff shrugged and allowed the professor to guide his hand into the opening.

Things happened fast. Before Duff had time to think or act, the little man had jumped away from him and slid a knife switch home on the side of the machine. There was a loud hum of sound and a rumbling roar that might have been a vacuum clean-

er sucking down a mountain.

Duff tried to pull his arm from the machine. He couldn't. His arm was followed by his shoulder, then his head, and Duff started screaming. His screams didn't last long. His body disappeared into the machine with a whine of sound.

AT THE opposite end, the professor was dancing around the smaller spot. Above the rumble of the machine he shouted joyfully.

"A hundred and ninety pounds of copper! Splendid! A hundred and ninety pounds of gold!"

Two things happened at once. The door burst open and Doctor Oswald jumped into the room, and at the same moment the machine seemed to explode. There was a blast of sound, a rush of wind and a dark pall of smoke.

Then silence.

Out of the sudden quiet and murky smoke clouds around the table, Doctor Oswald started yelling.

"Professor! Sergeant! What's happened!"

There was a coughing sound and out of the smoke came the black smudged figure of Professor Smith. He beamed up at Oswald. "Ah, doctor, you're just in time! I've just made my biggest batch—a hundred ninety pounds of copper into a hundred ninety pounds of gold!"

Oswald ignored him. "Where's the police sergeant? I don't see him!"

"The sergeant? Oh, he's gone."

"Gone? But that's impossible! I was standing just outside the door all the time. He must be here!"

The professor shook his head. "Oh, no, he left."

Oswald gazed at the smoke cloud still hanging over the machine. "What happened here? I told you to be careful with those machines of yours."

The little man frowned and started scratching his beard. "I don't know

what happened to it—it never did that before..."

Oswald rushed forward and started waving his arms into the smoke cloud. Slowly it drifted away from the center of the room. The table started to peep out. The professor danced up beside Oswald.

"Over here, doctor, get the smoke away from over here—this is where the gold comes out!"

Oswald moved blindly around the table and kept waving his arms. The smoke edged back away from the table.

They saw the machine. Oswald snorted disgustedly. The professor let out a cry of dismay.

The machine was a mass of twisted, blackened wires and metal bulges.

"It's all wrecked!" The professor moaned. "And look at the gold spout!"

Oswald looked. He looked into a large black empty hole.

There was no gold. There was nothing.

"You and your crackpot machines!" Oswald muttered.

"But I don't understand it!" the little man cried. "I put a hundred ninety pounds of copper into it—I know they got it!"

Oswald surveyed the room, ignoring the professor. He was looking for Sergeant Duff. But the sergeant wasn't there.

"Are you *sure* the sergeant left?" Oswald asked.

The professor twisted his hands. "Yes, yes, of course he left... My machine, my beautiful machine.... I thought they wanted copper.... Maybe I gave them the wrong kind...."

Oswald shook his head sadly. "You better go to bed, professor. I'll have someone clean up this room."

He left him leaning against the edge of the table, and tears were running down the little man's face.

"No gold, no more gold. . . ." Oswald heard him say as he closed the door.

"I can't figure it out," Oswald muttered as he walked down the corridor.

"I didn't see him leave. Oh, well, maybe he's waiting in my office."

But Sergeant Duff wasn't waiting.

**I**N THE LOOP, in his jewelry store, Moe sat before his desk, anxiously looking at the telephone, waiting for it to ring. Waiting for the signal from Duff to come and pick up the gold penny machine.

Moe waited a long time. Duff never called.

THE END

## LEGEND OF THE MESA



By MONA LHEASAH



**R**ECENT investigations by government anthropologists have thrown new light on the ancient habitats of early settlers of our country. One of these inquiries has led to a rather isolated spot in central New Mexico. Above the desert, on a mesa, which is difficult to reach stands the environs of the Acoma Indians. These people believed to be related to the Navahos and Pueblos, now have the honor of being known as the land's first citizens. From all indications the first settlement is thought to have been established sometime in the twelfth century. Little scientific proof is offered to show how the people migrated to this place. The only indication as to their origin is found in their own legends and mythology.

The spirit sisters, founders of the tribe, originally lived in the depths of darkness. The Almighty Spirit, creator of all, sent his messenger, the Lesser Spirit who delivered

the spirit sisters from the depths into the light. The great spirit had provided all the necessities, animals, and other spirits, both the good and the bad. Later, the Great Spirit visited one of the sisters with twin sons. Following, as girls were born, each bore the name of either an element, such as, Sun and Sky or that of an animal. All chiefs of the Acomas were chosen from the Antelope section of the tribe.

As the tribe grew and prospered, many of the people migrated from spots previously inhabited in search of their promised land. The Great Spirit decreed that the permanent home of the Acomas would be in the place where the chief's voice would echo each time the ceremonial word was spoken. There, in New Mexico the Acomas found their homeland, which today stands as evidence to the true discoverers of America.

## ANCIENT ASTRONOMY



By PETE BOGG



**M**UCH OF the data of today's astronomy is related to the ancient theories concerning the heavens. Some, an outgrowth of superstition, were false but yet, some serious thought was given to explanation of celestial bodies.

Two Hindu theories concerning the universe and the heavens are of interest. The first was based on the assumption that the world and surrounding media rested on a maze of pillars and itself was a plateau. During the day the sun passed over the inhabited earth to find its way through the pillars underneath to return to its original position. The second theory claimed the world to be composed of four

foundations each having its own form of life.

The national pride of Egypt led the world of its followers to believe that the universe was four-sided with Egypt as its center. The sky was a ceiling containing holes through which The Great Lamplighter allowed the light of the heavens to shine at night.

The first true scientific observation of the heavens was perhaps, due to the work of the Babylonians. The ranking members of the religious cults of that time were obligated to watch a particular celestial body each day and note its rising and setting together with any data they deemed important.

# TRAITOR to WAR

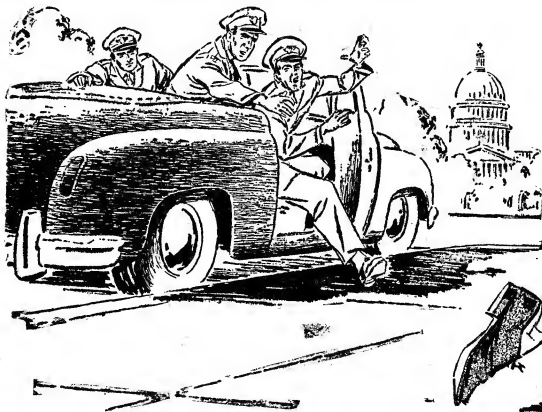
By JOHN and DOROTHY de COURCY

"Keep your hands on the table, gentlemen!" And that goes for the atom bomb. Sometimes a little stupidity can be turned to advantage, such as . . .

*—to resign at this time, since cessation of hostilities has likewise brought an end for the need of my services. The head of my department wishes to retain me but there are younger men who can fill the position better than I. I shall leave the decision as to when this resignation becomes effective in your hands although I would prefer that it be not*

*longer than thirty days. May I extend my appreciation to you for your helpful cooperation in the past and I hope that the work we have done will be of future use to our country.*

*Respectfully yours,  
Matthew Lockhart, Ph. D.,  
Consulting Physicist,  
National Inventors' Council,  
Department of Commerce.*





Two F.B.I. men tackled the little man and bore him to the sidewalk.

**T**HE THIN professorish man re-read the letter. "This should do it," he thought. He smiled benignly as though he were again looking at a classroom filled with eager, young students. "Yes, I think I can safely say I've done a good job here."

He leaned back in his chair. In this dreamy expression one could see the reflection of his thoughts, almost picture the little middle western town, the peaceful university, good humored philosophical discussions with other members of the faculty, the nodding heads, the waving hands and cheering hellos of students on the campus. It was all there in his eyes. The bustle and tension of Washington, D. C. were far behind, as soon it would be in reality.

Suddenly Matthew Lockhart straightened in his chair.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "I'd better hurry or I'll be late for supper."

Matthew began to work on the pile of papers on his desk, carefully reading and re-reading each one, making notations on them with a blue pencil. Some took only a minute, others longer, but soon there were only two left. Matthew read the first one half aloud.

"Dear National Inventors' Council:" it began. "I have a plan for killing all the fish near Japan. All they eat is fish and rice so this will work. I know it is possible because last year when my brother and I were dynamiting stumps, some kids got hold of some of the dynamite and set it off in the lake near our house. Since then, I haven't been able to catch a fish nor has anybody else. If the folks around here lived on fish, we would have been out of the war last year. I hope to hear soon about bombs blowing up all the fish around Tokyo so my boy can come home."

Chuckling, Matthew marked in large, blue letters, IMPRACTICAL. NO FURTHER INQUIRY ADVISED.

The last item on his desk, Matthew noted, was ten closely typed pages. Picking up the accompanying letter, he read:

"Sirs: Although I realize that you bloated bureaucrats will never put this to any good use, I feel obliged to send it to you anyway. The enclosed notes are a summary of five and a half years of work on nuclear fission. While preparing these notes for mailing, I heard on the radio that a nuclear fission bomb had been dropped in Japan. Although the reports have little to say, I judge that it operates on the principle of fission of the U-235 atom. Estimating from the reports, I would say this bomb is the result of science's abysmal ignorance of nuclear structures coupled with the government's bureaucratic incompetence. Obviously this weapon approaches total inefficiency and I doubt if more than a fraction of one percent of the matter is converted into energy. Had I wished to make a laughing stock of myself, I could have presented a bomb as crude as this years ago. Just so that you will know that I am not being boastful, I am enclosing detailed instructions for controllable atomic energy. To prepare a bomb from this, you have only to omit the cadmium and osmium from the basic alloy formula. The principle of this process is obvious, but I shall put it in English words of not more than one syllable.

"The nuclear end products of U-235 fission coupled with the temperature, cause the fission of the thorium in the basic alloy. The thorium's nuclear end products in turn bombard the lithium and the lithium's nuclear disintegration releases particles which cause fission of the cerium. The cer-

ium, under this bombardment, releases neutrons which again bombard the original U-235. This process maintains a constant stable disintegration in the presence of the proper amounts of cadmium and osmium. Without them, the disintegration of the basic alloy runs to completion in approximately one millionth of a second when the critical mass is reached. The end products of this disintegration have a total mass of approximately twelve percent of the original mass of the alloy. In other words, my simple minded bureaucrat, whoever you may be, this process is hundreds of times more efficient than the one you have used. To put it another way, it would be simple to use my alloy and filler element in the government's atom bomb and in so doing have a bomb sufficiently powerful to obliterate any nation from the map.

"I feel no sympathy for your cause or for any other nation's and I am sending you this only because I cannot stand science's exhibitions of barbaric ignorance and wish to show the type of results that a real scientist can obtain. Elwood McPherson, D. Sc."

**F**OR A full minute, Matthew Lockhart's mouth hung open and his mind rocked at the sheer effrontery of the letter. He could feel the mounting tide of blood sweeping upward to his hair and his hands shook.

"Of all the unmitigated gall!" he breathed. Taking a deep breath, Matthew laid the rather thick manuscript on his desk and began thumbing through the pages. At the end of the third page he straightened with a puzzled frown and made hasty notes on a pad. Some of the edge was taken off his anger when he realized that the author of the manuscript had no small knowledge of nuclear structure. He studied his own notes for a mo-

ment, then gnawed at the end of his pencil.

"I'm afraid it's going to take several hours to go through this," he sighed. Matthew glanced at the clock. "By George it's late! I wonder if I should leave this until Monday. No—I can't do that because I have to go to the proving grounds I—don't like to leave it. It's already been so long since it came in—

Shrugging his shoulders, Dr. Matthew Lockhart carefully put the papers in his briefcase and snapped it shut. He put on his hat and coat and adjusted his tie. Then picking up his briefcase and letter of resignation, he walked into the outer office. He laid his resignation in the outgoing basket and walked out of the building.

"My, my," he sighed. "Washington is certainly beautiful in the spring. I'm almost sorry to be leaving."

\* \* \*

**T**HE BIG man with the three silver stars on his shoulder paced the floor thoughtfully. He turned to a colonel who was standing ill at ease.

"Do you need any more men to follow this up?"

"I don't believe so, sir," the colonel answered. "I don't think there should be too many because it would arouse suspicion. Secrecy is more valuable to us than time right now."

"This is the most incredible thing!" the general growled. "To think that such things can go on right under our noses!" He paused. "Give me all the details, Colonel, and maybe I can think of a new angle to check on."

"Well, as I said, sir, this newspaper clipping reached me yesterday morning. The delay makes it almost impossible to follow any of the leads directly."

"When did you say it was published?" the general asked.

The colonel picked up a piece of cardboard on which a bit of news-

print was pasted.

"This editorial was printed in the Sulphur Nevada Herald, June 13th, 1945. The paper it was in apparently was left around the house of Mr. and Mrs. George Culver until ten days ago. They used it to pack a picture of themselves which they sent to their son, 2nd Lt. George Culver, Jr. Lt. Culver read this particular editorial and thinking it might be of some importance, brought it upstairs to our office and gave it to Captain Lowell. Captain Lowell brought it to me and we started a routine check."

"Just a minute," the general interrupted. "Read that editorial to me again."

The colonel cleared his throat.

"This has been a busy weekend for your editors and we have done quite a bit of running around. We were over to Dr. Willard's new office and from the looks of it, we would say that it's going to be fun to be sick from now on. Our good doctor reports that after much delay, his new x-ray is finally on the way.

"Our volunteer firemen responded nobly Saturday morning and put out a small fire in the back of Keller's General Store. 'Pop' Keller is happy to say that the damage is slight."

"Saturday on an impulse, we drove out to that nice looking concrete building that some of you may have seen in the middle of the Black Rock Desert. We learned from the county land agent that the place was owned by a Dr. McPherson. We weren't sure what to expect when we arrived, but we certainly were surprised. We knocked on the door and introduced ourselves to a rather thin faced man. We told him we would like to interview him."

"I don't want to talk to any blank reporters!"

"We're not reporters," we replied, "We're the editors."

"Well if you must know, baldy!" Dr. McPherson replied. "I'm conducting experiments in nuclear physics, if that means anything to you!" At this point the good Doctor slammed the door. When we get around to it, we plan to send out local savant a copy of 'How to Win Friends and Influence People'.

"Gus Pierson dropped in the other —" the general waved the colonel silent. "Well after that, sir," the colonel continued. "I realized this clipping was at least worth investigating."

"I should say so!" the general rumbled. "I don't think I need point out how serious the consequences would be if our secret of the atom bomb were to leak out. What about the reports?"

"They should be coming in soon, sir, almost any minute. I left orders to have them brought here immediately."

"Fine. Now, what about the desert, Colonel?" the General asked. "Can you remember the exact words?"

"WELL SIR," the colonel sighed, "when the plane returned to the Reno Army Air Base, the security officer phoned at once. He said that an area of about a mile in diameter was scorched. That's the word he used, sir. The area in the center, about five hundred yards across, was glazed and slightly concave. He said it looked like a big dish made out of green glass."

The General shuddered. "Then what?"

"I told him to dig up a chemist or a scientist of some sort who could test the area for radioactivity. About two hours later, he reported that he had flown a local assayer out to the spot and the assayer declared the ground quite radioactive. I had him put the assayer on the phone and I



told him how confidential this was. The security officer said he was quite reliable, but I told the assayer that a meteorite had fallen in the area. I said the government wanted to test it before releasing the information and then I swore him to secrecy."

The General nodded. "That's fine. So far so good. Now what about the effects of the blast?"

"That's the odd part, sir. There doesn't seem to have been a blast. The disintegration must have been partly controlled or at least checked in some way. Preliminary reports show that no blast has occurred in the surrounding territory for the past year that cannot be traced to known sources. However, a paper in Winnemucca reported a heavy thunder storm on March 10th. There was a notation about a very bright flash west of there. This is just a guess, but I think McPherson's laboratory was struck by lightning which somehow set off his fissionable material."

"Is that possible?" the general asked. "I don't know too much about it but—that is, I didn't think electricity had any effect on such things."

"Well there are any number of possibilities," the colonel replied. "There's a possibility that McPherson was able to control the rate of disintegration and his controlling apparatus went blooey or partly blooey when the lightning struck. Maybe it had enough control to prevent an explosion."

"If that's true, then McPherson's research was more advanced than the government's!"

"That's right," the colonel admitted, "but you understand that I'm only guessing. I'm probably dead wrong."

The general's answer was cut off by a rap at the door. The general opened it and a young soldier outside

came to attention.

"Report, sir," he said stiffly, "from Major Halstead's office." The young man saluted and departed rapidly.

Eagerly the two officers laid the teletype messages on the desk.

"Since you gave the orders, Colonel, you'll have to explain these to me."

The colonel studied the three messages before replying. "This one," he said picking up one of the sheets of paper, "is from Lt. Colonel Brent. He headed our G-2 office at the Presidio in San Francisco and is a very skillful man. I've ordered him to take charge of things at Sulphur." The colonel cleared his throat. "Arrived in Sulphur 4:30 p.m., PST," he read. "Interviewed newspaper editor Has no further knowledge. Six agents from Presidio arriving tonight. Will interview most of inhabitants." The colonel paused. "The second is from the security officer at the Reno Army Air Base. 'C-54 carrying staff members and equipment from Los Alamos arrived 4:10 p.m., PST. Equipment checked and prepared. Overnight supplies loaded. Trucks with further equipment following. Will arrive at Black Rock Desert tomorrow, a.m. Landing has been marked off on desert. Working party of twenty men awaiting C-54.'"

The colonel put the message aside and picked up the last. "This last is from the Presidio. I requested a check to be made on all chemical supplies purchased in the bay area by McPherson. 'Itemized list of chemicals purchased being prepared. Regarding your question: purchase of uranium, in form of uranyl acetate, quantity four ounces, from Golden Gate Chemical Co. on Sept. 16, 1942 by Dr. Elwood McPherson. Pitchblende, quantity 25 pounds, purchased from American Mining and Equipment Co. in April, 1939, by E. Mc-

Pherson. No other purchases. Will continue search."

The general smiled slightly. "Well I guess that answers our questions."

**T**HE COLONEL shook his head. "I'm afraid not, sir. The quantity of fissionable uranium isotopes from 25 lbs. of pitchblende is practically non-existent. Either McPherson discovered a way of artificially preparing U-235 or U-239 or else he was able to obtain fission of ordinary uranium."

The general's lack of comprehension was plainly written on his face. "What difference does that make?" he asked.

"Well it means that he must have been able to make any number of atom bombs from material that he could get anywhere."

"Maybe it's just as well that he did blow himself up!"

"I heartily agree. The only hitch is that we must be sure that no one else has learned of this process even if we can't obtain it ourselves."

The two men lapsed into silence. With jarring suddenness one of the telephones jangled.

"General Sutcliff speaking. Colonel Bonney? Just a moment." He passed the phone to the colonel. The colonel pressed a button on one of the other phones and handed the instrument to the general.

"This is Colonel Bonney," he said somewhat wearily.

"Hello, Colonel," a tinny voice replied. "This is Collins of the FBI. Your office said I would find you here. I just wanted to know if you have any information about a man named McPherson, Elwood McPherson. I think he's a scientist of some sort."

The general made strangling noises. The colonel coughed and tried to sound casual when he replied. "Yes.

I think we have a little information. What is it in reference to?"

"Well we picked up a small fry who does some free lance espionage now and then. We grilled him, but didn't get much. He had a card in his coat pocket— Just a minute and I'll get it."

During the pause neither the general nor the colonel breathed perceptibly.

"Here it is," the FBI man said cheerfully. "It's just a blank calling card on which someone has written, Elwood McPherson, D. Sc., c-o Postmaster, Sulphur, Nevada. We just wondered if you knew anything about him. We have no record of any agents operating in northern Nevada and I can't think of anything up there to spy on."

"Hello!" the general broke in. "This is General Sutcliff. I would like you to hold that man incommunicado and guard him with your life. Don't release him on any orders except from the president himself. We'll be over in fifteen minutes."

Both men hung up before the FBI man could answer. Quickly the general dialed another number, unconsciously muttering over and over, "my God, my God." Colonel Bonney nervously chewed on a thumbnail while the general swayed to and fro, clutching the phone to his ear. After what seemed an endless wait, the general said hoarsely: "Mr. Secretary? This is General Sutcliff. We'll pick you up in a staff car in ten minutes. It's a matter of terrible urgency, sir, most terrible. Thank you, sir. Good-bye."

**T**HE BLUE room of the white house is considered to be rarely beautiful in its proportions, but the Secretary of War was pacing around its elliptical circumference entirely oblivious of its existence. General

Sutcliff leaned on the white marble mantle, without regard for his military bearing. His eyes stared blankly at the heavy corded blue silk curtains. The secretary of state was slumped in a chair a few feet to the right of General Sutcliff. The pacing, leaning and sitting went on for several minutes without conversation. General Sutcliff had said just about all there was to say on the way over. The door opened quietly and the president entered followed unobtrusively by four secret service men. No one seemed to notice them.

Smiling slightly, and president adjusted his glasses and said softly: "It doesn't look as though I'm wanted around here."

"Go away!" General Sutcliff growled. "Can't you see—ups—that is—ah—Mr. President!"

The general was saved embarrassing explanations by the two cabinet members who converged on the president. The babble that followed sounded like two rival commentators trying to use the same microphone.

"Please, gentlemen, please!" the president protested. "One at a time."

Courteously the secretary of state indicated for the secretary of war to speak.

"Mr. President," the secretary began, "there is a situation of utmost gravity facing our nation. I'll let General Sutcliff tell you about it since he is more familiar with the details."

The general straightened and addressed his commander-in-chief. "Sir," he began, "Colonel Bonney of G-2 has presented me with some rather startling information. A scientist in Nevada has discovered the secret of atomic energy. Our investigations point to the fact that this man was killed in an explosion which blew his laboratory out of existence. This explosion was obviously of an atomic

nature. This is grave enough in itself, but a short time ago the FBI contacted us and informed us that they had captured a spy. In his possession was found a card bearing the name of this scientist. Colonel Bonney has gone to the FBI headquarters and will come here just as soon as he has questioned this spy."

The president shook his head slowly. "I've been afraid something like this might happen. Sooner or later someone was certain to duplicate the government's work."

"The part that has me worried, sir," the general responded, "is Colonel Bonney's conclusions on the matter. The colonel believes that this McPherson's work has surpassed the results the government has obtained, so much so as to render our secret valueless. Of course, the colonel may be pessimistic, but until the investigation is complete, we cannot be sure that he is not right."

"I see," the president said thoughtfully.

"What do you suggest we do?" the secretary of war asked.

The president smiled thinly. "I guess we might as well all follow the example set by the secretary of state and pace the floor until Colonel Bonney comes."

AS A MATTER of fact, only the two cabinet members paced the floor. The president sat on the edge of a chair staring moodily at the floor. The general resumed his station by the white marble mantle. The secret service men showed the strain of waiting, shifting nervously on their feet. The president looked at them over the top of his glasses. "Go ahead boys," he grinned. "Light up. You look as though you could use a smoke. I don't think this is any time to observe the rules."

There was a discreet rap at the

door. One of the secret service men opened it. One of the president's secretaries stood outside. He looked rather shocked at the cigarette hanging out of the corner of the secret service man's mouth, but overcoming his surprise, he whispered in the man's ear. The secret service man nodded his head and the secretary departed. He returned a moment later with Colonel Bonney and a dapper looking man in a gray herring-bone suit. The president arose from his chair and the two cabinet members stopped their pacing. No one spoke.

Finally the president said: "I imagine you are Colonel Bonney."

"Yes, Mr. President," the colonel replied. Indicating the dapper man, he added, "This is Mr. Collins, regional chief of the FBI."

A few moments later, everyone was clustered around Colonel Bonney who was sorting papers from a briefcase. "Undoubtedly," the Colonel said to no one in particular, "General Sutcliff has explained the situation."

Everyone nodded.

"After leaving the general's office," Colonel Bonney continued, "I met Mr. Collins and we questioned the spy together. This is the information he gave us." Colonel Bonney picked up several sheets of paper and glanced over them. "He received a typed letter in which he was offered two-hundred-fifty thousand dollars if he would investigate a Dr. McPherson and obtain results of his research. The letter mentioned that his work was of a scientific nature and that to be paid, the spy must obtain McPherson's research notes or a transcript of them. Upon completion of the task, this spy was to insert an advertisement in the New York *Herald Tribune* reading, 'George—, come home. I forgive you. I love you. Signed, Maud.' This spy would then receive another letter giving instructions as

to where he should leave the papers and receive his money. The letter was unsigned and after reading it, the spy destroyed it. He decided against taking the job because he thought it was too risky.

"This is what we plan to do. We are inserting this ad in the *Herald Tribune* and we're going to have a man pose as this spy and pick up his mail. We're not sure we can find out anything this way. We think this letter and the one that we might receive in answer to the ad may be written on some embassy typewriter. Unless there are letters in the government's files from every embassy, we would never be able to identify the machine. Because of their diplomatic immunity, we can't check on it too closely. Even if we knew who it was, it wouldn't mean too much since they might have the secret already."

THE PRESIDENT rubbed his chin. "In your opinion, Colonel," he asked, "would you say there was any likelihood that some foreign government might have the McPherson notes?"

"I can only guess, sir," the colonel replied, "but since some government knows of his work, it's not at all improbable that others do."

"That's what I think, too," the president said. "I can't see anything that we can do except maybe pray."

"We're checking on all angles now, sir, and I feel certain that we will have something definite to go on soon," the colonel replied.

"Yes, Mr. President," Collins agreed. "The FBI has put all of its available men on this case. We should have a definite idea of what is happening in all the diplomatic headquarters within a few hours. We've established a direct teletype line with Colonel Bonney's office so that we can coordinate our results."

"Good, good," the president said.

The door opened and an army courier entered. He saluted Colonel Bonney and handed him an envelope. The colonel dismissed the courier and then examined the contents of the envelope intently, Collins reading over his shoulder. The others waited impatiently. Suddenly both Colonel Bonney and Collins gasped simultaneously and they looked up smiling.

Colonel Bonney cleared his throat. "First of all gentlemen, a complete checkup on the shipments of radioactive material sent to Dr. McPherson show that he had only twenty five pounds of pitchblende and four ounces of uranyl acetate. I believe there is little doubt now that he was able to obtain almost complete disintegration. Best of all, the process doesn't seem to have slipped out of our hands. Our man in Sulphur Nevada questioned the postmaster and found that Dr. McPherson sent an item by registered mail to the National Inventors Council, weight five ounces, mailed on August 10, 1945. The contents were declared as being research notes."

"By George!" the general exploded. "That's it!"

"Yes indeed," the president agreed.

In the concerted rush to leave the room, the president was left behind. The ten minutes that followed will long be remembered by the Washington telephone exchanges.

**T**HE ENTOURAGE from the white house drew up in front of the department of commerce building just in time to see three FBI men and two M.P.s tackle a man who was running toward the entrance. The two cabinet members, General Sutcliffe, Colonel Bonney and Collins stood around while the M.P.s and the FBI men removed themselves from the unfortunate wreck at the bottom

of the pile. The two M.P.s dragged him to his feet.

General Sutcliffe's mouth hung open. "God!" he muttered. Then in a louder voice. "Release this man, you fools! It's the under-secretary of commerce!"

The two M.P.s instantly snapped to attention and the three FBI men smiled sickly. Collins and General Sutcliffe brushed dust off the under-secretary's torn and disheveled clothes.

When Collins had finished, he glared at the FBI men. "I'll attend to you later!" he hissed. "Get back to your post!"

Helping the limping under-secretary, the group entered the building. The general was still apologizing when they walked toward the master file room. Still half dazed the under-secretary produced a mass of keys and unlocked the master files.

"You could have at least warned me," the under-secretary mumbled as he thumbed through a file. "How was I to know that you turned our building into a fortress." He paused. "What was that name you wanted? McDaniel?"

"McPherson," the secretary of state interposed. "Elwood McPherson of Sulphur Nevada."

The under-secretary grunted and went on thumbing through the files. "McPherson, McPherson," he mumbled. "McPherson, Dan."

Everyone jumped.

"Ah. McPherson, Elwood, D Sc., c-o Postmaster, Sulphur, Nevada. Is this the one?"

Everyone nodded eagerly.

The under-secretary straightened. "This is his only card. It reads, 'Notes on nuclear fission. Eighty-eight percent conversion of matter,' whatever that is. 'Received August 15, filed August 27. Uninspected.'"

"Yes, yes," the secretary of war in-

terraptured, "but where is it?"

"I'm coming to that," the under-secretary answered. "File number 138749. Let's see. That would be in file room 13. This way, gentlemen."

The under-secretary led the way down the corridor, a ring of keys jingling in his hand. A few minutes later, the group clustered around an open filing drawer while the under-secretary painstakingly pawed through it. Looks of expectancy of various types as well as little smiles of triumph were universal.

Finally the under-secretary straightened with a puzzled look. "That's odd," he said. "It doesn't seem to be here."

"What!" the general roared.

"Impossible!" the secretary of war gasped.

"It's got to be here!" the secretary of state insisted.

Colonel Bonney contented himself with looking sick.

"You can see for yourself," the under-secretary pointed. "Here is 138748 and next to it is 138750. There is no 138749!"

"Could it possibly be in one of the offices?" Colonel Bonney asked.

"I hardly think so," the under-secretary said thoughtfully. "There would be a marker in here if it were. Still, this is a rather old file. One of the clerks may have overlooked that little formality."

**T**HAT'S ALL I wanted to know!" Collins barked. Taking a police whistle from his pocket, he blew three long blasts.

"Don't do that!" the under-secretary yelped, holding his ears.

Collins, however, was out in the hall.

"My men will take the even numbers," the colonel called. "You take the odd!"

Collins nodded and gave instruc-

tions to his men. Soon the organized uproar knew as a thorough search was begun.

The under-secretary of commerce trotted over to a door around which three soldiers had gathered. "Just a moment, gentlemen," he called. "That door is locked."

"It ain't now, bud," one of the soldiers replied, shoving a heavy boot through the glass.

From office to office the men went, systematically demolishing the entire section. Every desk drawer lay empty on the floor, every filing cabinet was cleaned out, even the waste baskets got a thorough scanning.

The under-secretary of commerce had long since thrown his ring of keys into a corner and had sunk into a chair, his head buried in his hands. Gradually the tumult died. One by one the groups of men reported failure. When the last group came in empty handed, a heavy silence settled on the room.

The two secretaries looked at each other. Then the secretary of state turned to General Sutcliff. "We'll be at the White House."

The general nodded glumly.

As the two secretaries turned to leave, the secretary of state muttered under his breath. "Looks like I'll be flying to London."

The secretary of war just grunted.

General Sutcliff sat down wearily. "What do WE do?"

Collins gnawed on his knuckle. "Carry on our investigation. Secretly."

Colonel Bonney nodded. "The next step is to put a guard around the home of everyone who might have had access to that file. Then we'll question them all. We'll pick out the ones who would be the most likely to understand what those notes meant and question them personally. We've got to do this and still not let on what we're looking for. We'll have to

have some fictitious reason for our questioning. Let's see—how about radar?

"Good idea," Collins agreed.

"You see, the important thing is not what they have to say, but their reactions to the situation."

"But as a precautionary measure," Collins added, "we'd better have all the places searched. My men will take care of it."

The three men tried to persuade the under-secretary of commerce to provide the necessary list of names.

"Only under one condition," the under-secretary stated. "No more house wrecking! And you get this mess cleaned up before Monday morning!"

"Agreed!" the general growled. "I'll have a detachment here in an hour to do the work."

Pertinaciously they followed the under-secretary to the personnel office.

\* \* \*

MATTHEW glanced out of the window of his study. "Hmm. Those two men are still standing outside. I wonder what they're waiting for?"

He had noticed them when he came down to breakfast. "Maybe I should tell them that the bus runs on the next street. Still, I guess I shouldn't interfere in things that don't concern me."

Matthew walked over to his desk and looked at the research notes of Elwood McPherson. "It's certainly a job checking all those figures. But—it's just too authentic to shelve. It would be so disappointing if all this work accomplished nothing." He turned to look out the window again at the bright morning sunlight. "Oh well," he sighed. "I can finish this later."

Stretching his arms Matthew walked back over to the window and looked curiously at the two men on

the sidewalk. He watched for several minutes and was on the point of leaving when a sedan drew up in front of the house and stopped. Three men emerged and talked briefly to the two men on the sidewalk.

"Well, well, what's this," Matthew mumbled.

The leader of the trio produced a piece of paper from his pocket and started walking toward the door of Matthew's house. The other two men followed him.

"What on earth!" Matthew exclaimed. "Well, there's only one way to find out." He started from the front door to intercept his callers. Just as the buzzer sounded, Matthew opened the door. "Yes? What can I do for you?"

"Are you Dr. Matthew Lockhart?" the man with the paper asked.

"Yes—" Matthew admitted. "Is—is something wrong?"

"I'm afraid so, Doctor," the man answered. "We're from the FBI. This," he said, extending the paper, "is a warrant to search your house."

"Oh—er, come in, gentlemen." Matthew closed the door behind them.

"We're sorry we have to do this, Dr. Lockhart, but some very important papers have disappeared."

"Oh," Matthew breathed. "Oh—What kind of papers?"

"Well," said the FBI man, carefully following instructions, "we're not supposed to tell you, but they are in connection with an improved system of radar."

For a moment, Matthew had been worried. He had illogically jumped to the conclusion that these men might have come for the McPherson notes. After all, if they were the results of genuine research and proved feasible, they would be a great boon to the country.

"Well—ah—where would you like to begin?" Matthew asked.

"It doesn't make much difference,

Doctor. We won't miss anything."

"Hmn, yes, of course. Well—ah—have an office in here. Would you like to start there?"

"Fine," the FBI man said.

As he entered his study, Matthew glanced around. "I'm sorry things are in such a mess, gentlemen, but I'm a bachelor and my housekeeper usually has weekends off."

As a matter of fact, the room was quite neat, but not to the orderly eye of Matthew Lockhart.

**P**ICKING up the McPherson notes from his desk, Matthew extended them to one of the FBI men. "Here are some notes I am working on. There might—"

"Yes, very interesting," the FBI man interrupted, preemptorily. He glanced at them and laid them on Matthew's chair. Without any hesitation, he began thoroughly to examine the desk, its contents, the drawers and even took the blotter out of its folder. Another man riffled through the pages of books and piled them carefully on the floor. The man who was looking through Matthew's desk, finally straightened. "The desk is okay, Wallace," he said.

Matthew picked up the McPherson notes from his chair and laid them on the top of the pile of papers on his desk. He sat down wondering if his study would ever be the same again.

"Nothing in the book shelves, Wallace," the other man called.

Wallace rolled back the edge of the carpet under which he had been looking. "All right boys. We'll start on the next room."

Matthew arose and led the way to the living room. It was nearly an hour before the search was over. The men had been more careful than they had been at the department of commerce. Finally they all stood at the

door.

"We want to thank you very much for your cooperation, Dr. Lockhart," Wallace said. "We're sorry that we had to cause all this trouble, but I'm sure you understand this is a very vital matter to our country."

"Oh—yes of course," Matthew said, perplexed.

"Ah—one more thing, Dr. Lockhart," Wallace added. "I want to caution you not to leave your home. There will be someone here to question you later on. We have men on guard outside, but they will not bother you unless you try to leave. You understand there is nothing personal in this. In an affair of this kind, there can be no exceptions."

"Naturally, naturally," Matthew agreed, even more perplexed. "I'll do my utmost to cooperate."

"That's fine, Doctor," Wallace said in his professionally enthusiastic voice.

Matthew closed the door and stood staring at the floor. "Sometimes I think everyone in Washington is insane," he breathed. "Well— Better straighten up my desk so I can finish those notes before I have any more interruptions."

**C**OLLINS and Colonel Bonney re-entered the sedan and sank back in the cushions.

"Another blank," Collins said wearily.

"Yes," the colonel sighed.

"Ho hum," yawned Collins. "Wish I could get some sleep."

Colonel Bonney nodded his head. "Just think," he said. "Fifteen years ago I was a buck private and I used to dream about being a dashing colonel in G-2."

"Looks like you made it," Collins answered.

"Yes," Colonel Bonney agreed wryly. "I made it, but now I keep



wishing I was a buck private again getting ready for a good night's sleep and looking forward to Sunday."

"I know what you mean," Collins groaned. "There's probably some simple minded law student somewhere who's just finished dinner and is leaning back in a chair wishing he was a big shot in the FBI."

"Well, this isn't getting any work done," Colonel Bonney replied.

"I suppose not," Collins agreed apathetically. "Who's next on the list?"

"Ah—Dr. Matthew Lockhart, consulting physicist for the council. 'I've been saving him for the last.'"

The colonel paused to give instructions to the driver.

"How come you're saving him?" Collins asked.

"Well, I thought if we didn't get any results, I would tell this Lockhart the whole story. As consulting physicist, there's a good chance he may have seen or heard about this research. If so, he might be able to give us a lead."

"Is he reliable?" Collins asked.

Colonel Bonney nodded. "Twenty-four carat. He was professor of physics at Central Polytechnic University for twelve years. I understand he's going back pretty soon. He'll probably be the next dean. As a matter of fact he didn't apply for his position as consultant. He was suggested by the secretary of commerce. Central Polytechnic is the secretary's alma mater, you know."

"Well, how much are you going to tell him?"

"Oh—the whole story. It's just a wild gamble, I know, but he's the only man we're sure of. Fortunately nuclear physics is right up his alley. If anyone would remember about McPherson's work, he would."

"This sounds interesting," Collins answered. Suppose you do the talking

and I'll keep my eyes open. We'll compare notes afterward."

"Okay," the colonel said.

"By the way, I called the state department and told them we'd flopped."

Colonel Bonney grinned. "I went a little further than that. I told General Sutcliffe that it was an absolute certainty that the secret was in the hands of a foreign government. I think it's just as certain that McPherson's work was genuine."

Collins sighed. "What happens now?"

"Well, unless we find out who's got the super atom bomb, we just sit around and twiddle our thumbs until we're blown off the map."

"That's a nice thought."

THE CAR slowed and stopped. As they stepped out, the two men on guard approached. They recognized Collins immediately.

"He's been inside most of the day, sir," one of them said. "He came out about twenty minutes after we relieved Wescott and Bloor. He talked with us for a while and he seems like a nice old duffer. He asked us when you would be here and we said about seven."

"How did he know I was coming?" Collins asked.

"He didn't," the man replied. "He just wanted to know when the men would arrive to question him."

"Oh," Collins grunted. "I guess you boys better stick around until we're through. You can wait in the car if you want to."

Collins and Colonel Bonney turned, walked up the steps and knocked on the door. Matthew opened it and looked at the men apprehensively. "Are you the gentlemen I've been expecting?"

Colonel Bonney nodded. "Yes, Dr. Lockhart."

"Won't you come in?" Matthew invited.

"Thank you," Colonel Bonney smiled. They walked into the living room and seated themselves. Matthew was quite anxious to get this questioning over with so that he could go out for a walk. He didn't like staying in the house all day.

"Before we say anything, Dr. Lockhart," Colonel Bonney began, "you must understand that all of this is of the utmost secrecy. Should our conversation leak out, the repercussions would be very serious."

"Of course," Matthew agreed. "I shouldn't dream of repeating a word."

"Excellent," Colonel Bonney smiled. "Now to begin with, our men told you that some papers on a new radar setup had been stolen."

Matthew nodded.

"Well, that's not exactly true. Some papers were stolen all right, but they were research notes on atomic energy by a Dr. Elwood McPherson. Apparently, some foreign government got in touch with someone working for the National Inventors' Council and paid them to steal the notes."

"Yes," Collins growled. "And if we find the dirty traitor, you can take my word for it, he'll wish he'd never been born."

Matthew gulped and swallowed the revelation he was about to make. "How awful," he muttered.

"Yes, it is," Colonel Bonney replied.

Matthew Lockhart was horribly confused. There were so many questions he wanted to ask, but he didn't dare. All he could do was sit and listen and wonder what to do.

Colonel Bonney went on talking. "The worst part is that Dr. McPherson was killed in an explosion that destroyed his laboratory some time ago."

"Oh," Matthew said in a small

voice. He grasped at a straw. "Is there—any—possibility that—the papers might have been lost—or misplaced?"

"None!" Colonel Bonney said emphatically. "There's no doubt about the fact that someone has betrayed our country."

Matthew gulped again.

**I**N BRIEF sentences, Colonel Bonney outlined all the events since the arrival of the newspaper clipping. Matthew hardly heard what he was saying. Instead, his mind raced this way and that, jumping here and there becoming more confused every minute. "Oh my goodness!" he thought. "If they find out I have it, I'll be shot. What can I do!" Through his mind ran the grim picture of a cold, gray dawn, a stone wall, a little cloth blindfold and unrelenting faces staring at him along the barrels of rifles.

Colonel Bonney kept talking about the unfortunate situation that had allowed this to happen. Finally he paused and waited for Matthew to speak. Matthew was staring beyond the colonel but when the colonel stopped speaking, Matthew tried very hard to look composed. He still couldn't think of anything to say.

"You see now, Doctor, just how grave a danger this is to our country," Collins added.

"Yes," Matthew answered hoarsely. "What—what would you like me to do?"

"Frankly I don't know," Colonel Bonney replied. "We hope that you may be able to tell us something of value."

Something cold and clammy clutched at Matthew's heart.

"That is, we hope that you might have heard some reference to or possibly even seen the McPherson notes. You see, if we can get an idea of who might have taken them, we can fol-

low that up. Maybe we can find out what country is in possession of the secret. If so, we can take steps to protect ourselves before they have had time to use the secret. But we must know who it is before we can move. This situation is something like the lawlessness in the old west. If you remember, in the early days everyone was armed. Fights were not at all uncommon since each man was a law unto himself. That's about the situation of the nations of the world today. Do you see what I mean?"

Matthew nodded dumbly.

"To carry it further," Colonel Bonney went on, "suppose word leaked out that someone had suddenly come into possession of an infinitely superior weapon. For instance, say it leaked out while all of the men in this little western town were in the local saloon. Do you know what they'd do, Doctor?"

"I—I'm afraid I couldn't say."

"Well, it would be something like this. Each man in that saloon, except the man with the new weapon, would know that his life was in danger and would immediately put both of his hands, palms down, on the bar in plain sight, or if they were sitting at a table, they would do the same. Naturally, the men with the weapon would also. That's exactly what's happened. Every country in the world is afraid because they all know about this weapon. In fact, every embassy has been in an uproar for twenty-four hours. They know that the secret exists, but they don't know who has it. From their point of view, they can't know that we don't have it since this might all be an act to make them think we don't have it." The colonel paused.

"What—what—happens—when the—they—?"

"What happens when the men in the saloon find out who it is? The answer is simple. They'll draw their

guns and shoot him because he's a menace to everyone in that saloon."

"But—but—" Matthew objected. "If they don't find out—who he is, they wouldn't start a fight among themselves, would they?"

"I see what you mean," the colonel smiled, "but it doesn't exactly work that way. Naturally there will be no war until this super weapon is revealed, but remember, Dr. Lockhart, when the man uses his weapon, all the others will be killed. The first man that takes his hands off the table better be quick because all the rest will go for their guns too and they'll all be shooting the same man. It's just a question of waiting to see who makes the first move, since he obviously would have the weapon or he wouldn't dare. The menace is only temporary peace insurance and will end in war eventually."

**M**ATTHEW was all mixed up. None of this made much sense to him. All he knew was that this whole thing was getting worse all the time and he couldn't think of anything to do.

"Now Dr. Lockhart," Colonel Bonney said, "is there anything you can think of or remember regarding these notes? Can you remember ever hearing the name of Elwood McPherson or have you ever seen it?"

Matthew covered his eyes with his hand. "If I tell the truth," he thought, "They'll never believe me." Matthew realized how fantastic his story would sound. It was just too unbelievable! They couldn't believe the truth because too many unexplainable things had occurred. He couldn't explain how the foreign governments found out about it and they would be sure to connect it with him somehow. Then, Matthew had a glimmering of an idea. Shaking his head slowly, he replied: "I'm sorry, gentlemen. I don't remember of ever having heard

any reference to McPherson or to his work. I know the notes never reached my desk."

"I see," said Colonel Bonney dejectedly. "Well—it was only a last hope on our part, Dr. Lockhart. Thank you, anyway." He arose to leave and Collins followed him to the door.

"I wish I could be of more help," Matthew said, hesitantly.

"There isn't much anyone can do to help now, I guess," Collins replied. "I'm sorry we had to inconvenience you, but we just couldn't take any chances. You're free to leave your house now."

"Oh. That's perfectly all right, gentlemen. I—I'm only sorry—that I'm of so little use."

"Well, goodnight Doctor," Colonel Bonney sighed, "and thank you again."

"Good night," Matthew answered.

The door closed and Colonel Bonney and Collins looked at each other.

"Another blank!" Collins stated.

"And our last lead, too," the colonel muttered.

"Well, what happens now?" Collins asked.

"Tonight? Nothing. Tomorrow, I help make the arrangements to turn the atom bomb over to the UNO Security Council."

Collins raised his eyebrows and whistled slightly. "How come we've changed our policy?"

"It's the saloon scene again," Colonel Bonney replied. "The United States is a lot better off if all its neighbors are armed with atom bombs. At least, we won't be the obvious nation to attack first."

"Well, how is this going to be explained in the newspapers?"

"It probably won't be," the colonel replied, "we'll just let people wonder a few days over the change of heart. After all, it isn't too important. With all the other changes in foreign policy that will take place, most people

won't have time to give it a second thought."

"Oh. You know about the disarmament treaty?" Collins asked.

Colonel Bonney nodded. "General Sutcliffe told me on the phone."

The two men walked slowly to their car. "Have you got anything to do now?" Colonel Bonney asked.

"Nope."

"In that case, come on down to my club. We can phone our reports in from there and I'll treat you to a highball and dinner."

"Sounds like a good idea," Collins said, yawning. "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we undoubtedly die."

"And keep your hands in plain sight when you drink," Colonel Bonney chuckled.

Neither of the men thought it was very funny. In fact, they were definitely depressed as they climbed into the car.

\* \* \*

ANNIE, the housekeeper, poked her head through the doorway of Matthew's study. "Would you like me to fix you some breakfast before I go to church, Doctor?" she asked.

"Ah—no thank you, Annie," Matthew answered. "I'll get something later if I feel hungry."

"You really ought to eat something," she persisted. "You hardly ate a thing last night."

"I know," Matthew sighed. "Everything's been in such a turmoil, I guess I've lost my appetite. I promise to fix something later on."

"All right, Doctor," Annie called cheerily.

A few minutes later, the front door opened and closed. Matthew watched Annie waddle down and street and out of sight. Then he went back to grappling with his problem.

"How am I going to do it," he sighed. The solution to his dilemma

was clear. He had to get those papers back in the file. He had known that last night. But how?

"Should I brazenly carry them in my briefcase?" he wondered. "I could send them to myself by registered mail. Surely the postman could bring it in without being searched. Or could he?"

For an hour Matthew paced the floor, thinking and thinking, evolving plans and discarding them. Finally he walked back to his desk and glanced at the McPherson notes again. "If only this wasn't sound! If only this was impractical or impossible!" Matthew's fingers riffled through the notes. "Here in my hands," he muttered, "is the secret of almost total disintegration, the secret the world has looked for for years. Now I've got it and I can't think of any way to get rid of it!"

Abruptly, Matthew turned his back on his desk and walked into the kitchen. He stood for a moment wondering what would taste good. He opened the ice box, surveyed the contents, and closed it again. "I think I need fresh air more than I need food," he mumbled.

Heaving a long sigh, Matthew walked out of the kitchen and out of the house, stopping only long enough to put on his hat and coat. He looked up and down the street irresolutely. The same Washington that had exhilarated him two days before now depressed him. He began walking slowly, still thinking. He was firmly seated on the horns of a dilemma and the position was by no means comfortable.

"I want to give it back," he thought, "but how can I do it without getting shot? I know they wouldn't believe the truth. Maybe I can think of a good story to tell that would sound believable and still let them know that no foreign government has seen

the notes, much less copied them."

On and on Matthew went, walking and thinking. He had gone quite a way when hunger intruded on his consciousness. He looked up the street and saw a restaurant. "I suppose I'd better eat," he sighed.

With quickening steps he walked to the restaurant, entered and sat down. Finally the meal arrived, but with it came no peace of mind. He ate slowly, stopping occasionally when a new thought or new idea seemed feasible to him. Eventually he decided nothing would work but his original plan. He would return the papers in his briefcase and put them back in the file.

**M**ATTHEW completed his "brunch" and began walking again. His legs and back ached, his old muscles were tired. His mind was tired too. He had made up his mind but he didn't feel any better. At least he could stop thinking. Matthew found a bench and sat down. He didn't notice the bright sunshine, the singing birds or the children playing. He just sat, not thinking, not seeing.

Matthew suddenly realized that it was getting late. He looked around him. It took him a few minutes to remember where he was. "I must have fallen asleep," he said, stretching. "My, but I'm tired."

He arose and walked out of the park he had wandered into two hours before. He was not far from home, but it seemed a long way to Matthew. He kept trudging and at last his weary footsteps sounded on the porch of his house. Annie opened the door just as Matthew reached it.

"You're late, Doctor," she said. "I've been keeping your dinner warm."

"I'm sorry, Annie," he apologized. "I didn't realize it was so late."

"That's all right," Annie said, cheerfully. Take your things off and I'll put your dinner on the table."

Matthew sighed as he sat down. His appetite hadn't improved. He stirred the food around on his plate. "The condemned man ate a hearty dinner!" he thought. "But how? Still, I guess a condemned man does have one advantage. At least he's certain of his future." Matthew pushed his plate away. He couldn't stand looking at it anymore.

Annie stuck her head through the door. "Why Doctor! You're not eating!"

"I can't, Annie. I know the food is good, but I just can't eat." Matthew noticed Annie's worried frown as he got up from the table. "Don't worry, Annie. I'll be all right tomorrow."

"Well, just in case you change your mind, I'll fix a snack and leave it in the ice box. If you get hungry, you won't have to fix anything." Annie started clearing the table and Matthew walked into his study.

He sat down at his desk. He looked at the McPherson notes, thought about Colonel Bonney and remembered the parallel. "I wonder where I fit into that saloon scene." Matthew thought for a moment. "I guess I don't," he decided. "Well, at least I can get those papers back—" He stopped. His mouth hung open. In a blinding flash of clarity he had seen it all. Suddenly he realized that the saloon scene was all wrong.

"That's it!" he whooped, "that's it!" Matthew got up and paced the floor. Then he sank down in his chair and picked up the McPherson notes. "That's what's wrong!" he exclaimed. "You're not in the bar room! But everyone thinks you are! And as long as they think you're there, the men are going to keep their hands on top of the table! What was it that colonel said? Every embassy has been

in a turmoil? Then they each think that someone else has got this!"

Matthew frowned. "It will only work until someone rediscovers this." He thought over the notes again. He remembered when he had first seen them and how fantastic it had all seemed, how impossible they had been. "To be sure," he mused, "this will be re-discovered or maybe something superior to it will be found, but that will take time. Quite a bit of time. I wonder, I wonder!" Smiling, he nodded his head. "Yes, it will be a long, long time and maybe by then, people will be used to keeping their hands, palms down, on top of the table."

A new thought struck Matthew. "What about science? Without these notes, it will take them years to reach the same level." He pondered on this and then shook his head. "That's exactly it. Science is too far advanced already for society. People will have to grow up before they can use this. Now they would use it for their own destruction. It would be like giving a baby a bottle of poison to play with."

Resolutely, determined, Matthew arose from his chair and walked to the tiny fireplace. He laid the McPherson notes on the grate. He held the match in his hands for a full minute and then with a sigh, he struck it and touched the flame to the papers. He knew it was the right thing, yet it was a hard task, a very hard task for a scientist. He watched the flame rise and gradually die away. Soon there was not even a spark. Picking up a poker, he methodically pulverized the ashes until there was nothing but dust. Then he dropped the poker and walked slowly upstairs to bed.

THE END

# PALOMAR PUSH-UP



By CHARLES RUDD



THE PUBLIC won't get much of an opportunity to see with its own eyes the construction of that vast temple to astronomy on Mount Palomar where the two hundred inch telescope is housed. Nevertheless, there is tremendous curiosity about it. A great deal has been written about the construction of the telescope, about the vast care taken in the grinding and the polishing of the mirror, about the wonderful automatic conveniences provided for the work in photography and spectroscopy, about the lavish quarters provided for the scientists and their associates.

The astronomical monthly, *Sky and Telescope*, published recently some interesting material which rarely appears about telescopes. Have you ever wondered how the mounting and the orientation of the mounting are originally set and then maintained? This writer has—and now the answer has been given.

The telescope itself rests in a monstrous cradle clearly shown in all the popularizations written about the two hundred inch. But what about the cradle itself? It

rests on a huge bridge-like structure of heavy steel girders. The heavy steel girders in turn rest upon steel balls and pillars which are supported on gigantic jacks. The jacks in turn are supported on the bedrock of mount Palomar itself. When the mounting of the telescope has to be adjusted, a workman, using a huge wrench goes to work on the screw jack, turning them carefully and moving the whole tremendous structure, the fraction of an inch that it needs. If the foundations settle ever so slightly, a twist of the screws will bring the mounting back into alignment. Thus science has had to revert to the most elementary principles to adjust its greatest creation.

Screws also permit a lateral adjustment about a pivot-point consisting of a steel sphere twenty-four inches in diameter—rather a hemisphere, with the aid of optical instruments and a large wrench, the telescope can be shifted around in terms of fractions of an inch, just like you'd shift a house around! It's a wonder they didn't try to do it electronically....

# THE METEOR HUNTERS



By CHESTER BURKE



ASTRONOMICAL associations all over the world have for a long time, maintained groups within themselves whose main purpose has been to record meteorite paths, to chart and map them in order to get a picture of meteor activity. Because such observations are only approximate, being made with the naked eye or a low-powered glass, and because the location can only be described approximately, such meteor-observing is not the best.

But ever since amateur radiomen discovered that their receivers could, on certain frequencies, pick up or detect "meteor-static", radio observation has been applied to meteors. It has been found, that with these suitable high frequencies, radar sets can track meteors perfectly and accurately.

In Canada, a regular network of meteor observing radar stations is being set-up. Stations widely spaced are able to obtain an exact "fix" on meteorites as they penetrate our atmosphere. A check on accuracy can be made by comparing the observations of one station against the other. Above all, the positions of the descending meteorites can be located exactly.

Furthermore, the tracking and observing can be done automatically. If the problem becomes important enough, completely automatic remote stations, may be built whose sole function is to record this data.

The value of such knowledge is at once apparent. It won't be long before men start venturing out into space. Scientists have theoretically calculated the chances of a vessel being struck by a meteor. While they are remote, they are still existent. Any further knowledge of the exact conditions obtaining in the outer "atmosphere" will be valuable.

It is possible that scientists have erred on the side of conservatism—on the other hand they may have exaggerated the dangers. Regardless, the meteor-observations will be useful. It shows very well, how two such remote relations—radar and astronomy—suddenly became intimate through the gradual lining that's taking place in all the hitherto diverse sciences. Maybe we won't have astronomers and physicists and biologists and geologists, but rather, more simply, "scientists."

# The WORLD IS DEAD

By ALEXANDER BLADE

**H**OW DOES ONE go about the telling of the death of a world? Is it to begin with the first attack, the last attack; are the heroics of the people to be the central theme? The women of Olam-Ot marched off in gallant, though futile battalions to die on the plains of Zung; surely they deserve a place in a page of a history book. It is a most difficult thing indeed, this re-hashing of what is now, an old tale. But I feel that someone should make a footnote of posterity.

But the beginning; it is so hard! Perhaps the best way, the truth, is to say it all began in the warped mind

of a man who lived on a planet a hundred light years from Constellation D, a planet called, Earth. . .

I can see my grand-grandchild playing among the yellow and white tula flowers in the garden below. His nurse, the aged Talat-At, sits in a wicker chair, her head back against the back rest, dozing in the soft, fading light of a dying sun. The purple hills, whose swelling bosoms stretch for illimitable distances, are shadowed now. The plain is filled with color where once it was filled with blood. And the air is soft, redolent with the scent of flowers, and I am an old man who finds it hard to



I landed flat on my back at the bottom of the stairway . . .





It took all the efforts of the Interplanet Secret Service to uncover the secret menace — and in spite of it, a planet came to its end! It all happened because of one man's greed . . .

think back on the years of blood.

**T**HE GREAT Hall Of Kings was filled to overflowing. It was the week of the Festival. Carnival stretched its great hand across the whole of Zung-Ho. From the smallest hamlet in the far-off places, from the great sister cities, from the hanging islands of Ghat, from far and near, the people had sent representatives to the Hall Of Kings. *For this was Carnival!* And joy and happiness was in the air.

The pasty vendors called from their booths, the minstrels sang on each corner, the hawkers of Carnival wares shouted and waved their trash under the noses of each passerby, and from curb to curb, the street was overflowing with people. Not the least of these was I. For I was not enough past the flush of youth not to be still delighted with the color and gayety, thrilled by the sounds and smells, entranced by the Mummers and singers, and all in all, like a child who for the first time had seen a song-play.

Yet I felt a wave of sadness come over me. Though I was part of it, I was yet not any longer a part of it. For I had been only the week before promoted to a commander of a battle cruiser of His Majesty's fleet, And only circumstance had been fortunate for me in that I was to receive my orders in the week of Carnival.

Oh, well, I thought as I stepped smartly up the short flight of stairs which led to the inner chamber beyond the great doors which opened on the great hall, at least I shall have a week of fun. The double guard saluted smartly and came to attention. I returned the salute and reached for the bronze knob, and the door was flung open against my hand, bruising my thumb and bringing a startled expletive to my lips.

"Watch it, there!" a voice bel-  
lowed.

But my eyes were on the girl on the right of the huge man confronting me. I think there was another girl with him, but to this day I'm not sure about it. I had eyes only for the girl on the right. A dozen phrases leaped to mind. . . *Eyes, blue and limpid as of liquid-sky; hair, spun strands of molten gold twined in wondrous fashion about the fine-shaped head; a throat of ivory, smooth and straight as one of the columns near which we stood; and below the beautiful neck was a body which sent the blood leaping through my body in a hot flood: the glimpse of a half-hidden breast showed it flawless, white, tinged with pink. . .*

"Well, Commander?" the man's voice drove through my conscious-  
ness.

I forced my glance to focus on the man with an effort. He wore the uniform of an Upper Commander, the sight of which brought me bolt upright in stiff attention.

"Sorry, sir," I stammered. "I didn't see. . ."

"Of course you didn't, you whipper-snapper," he grunted, yet not angrily, for I detected a smile at the corner of his eyes. "Just a moment," he stopped me before I could go on. "Aren't you Commander Hodas?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now that's a coincidence," the Upper Commander said. "I was just asking old Borda-Ba about you and he said he was expecting you." He turned to the two girls, and said, "Run along now. I'll meet you at the Plaza for the Mummer show tonight. And you, Commander, come along with me."

**I** COULD NEVER get over the feeling pride in the fighting

men of my race as we strolled through the short, marble-facaded passage which led to the room of the Military Council. For every ten feet or so, a sentry stood at attention, rigid as a statue, a jet rifle on his shoulder. Their eyes were front nor did they give the slightest hint they could see us. But it was all too evident that the Upper Commander's thoughts were elsewhere and, undoubtedly, on more important things. His rather heavy face, lined deeply with criss-cross patterns, was set in a frown.

He said nothing until we reached the door of our goal, and there, he held it open for me to enter.

The Supreme Military Commander, a slight man in the late years of his life, sat at the familiar semi-circular desk. At one end, a scribe sat, quill poised over paper, ready for the slightest word. On a deep-down settee, a couple of junior officers sat, bolt-upright in rigid readiness for any order. Other than the desk and single settee, the room held no other appointments. It was easy to see the Supreme Military commander held low regard for the frills and fripperies of civil life.

My Commander's shallow, pink-rimmed eyes lit up at sight of us.

"Ah! So you've met, eh? Good! Hodas, my boy, come along and find a seat here, somewhere. We want to talk to you, don't we, Upper Commander, Viga-Va?"

"Indeed we do," Viga-Va said thoughtfully.

Viga-Va sat beside my Commander and I found a chair, or rather the scribe gave me his, and I pushed it where the two could see me face to face.

"I have had some excellent reports about you, Commander Hodas," my Commander began. "Excellent! Especially on the expedition against

the rebellious tribes of the lower rim country. Your Leader spoke especially about how you contrived, and on the spur of the emergency, to change defeat into victory. Excellent!"

I made a deprecating gesture. "It was not as great a feat," I said, "as my leader made it to be, Chance..."

"Now my boy," my Commander said, interrupting, "if all our plans went strictly by plans...Ah, then, war would be a matter for armchair strategists. But chance in a thousand forms sets our most elaborate plans askew. It's the man who takes hold of opportunity and twists it to his desires, who is the one which wins in the end.

"And that is why we want you. A matter has come up which demands immediate attention. It requires the services of a man whom we can trust implicitly, who is quick-witted, brave, resourceful, and above all, intelligent. We are of the opinion you are that man. No doubt, you have heard the rumors which have been bruited about of late. . .?"

I nodded my head. Of course I had. Who hadn't, who wasn't of the higher military hierarchy? But I was not the sort to pay too great a heed to rumor. Many of the junior officers lent too much credence to the foolishness of a whispering mouth.

"I thought so," Borda-Ba said, smiling. "And for once, some of them have their foundations in truth."

I looked at him, startled. Why, that was impossible! War, that is the kind of war rumor had it, the kind which involves entire planets hadn't happened for four cycles. Who, what planet was foolhardy enough to attack or declare war? They were jesting! But they weren't! Not quite.

"Now, now," Borda-Ba said quickly, interpreting the look on my face. "No

need to get excited. It is a long way in the offing, that is," he hesitated, and suddenly those pale eyes were sharp in their searching glance, "if our plans work out."

**I** WAITED WITH more than just a little impatience.

Intelligence reports that on a certain planet in the Constellation R, scientists discovered the use of war with atoms, rockets and, worse, cosmic rays. We assume it natural that soon or late some idiot with an overpowering ego will try to assume dictatorship over this planet, called, Earth.

"Already rocket ships have been sent to the farthest reaches of their solar system. Soon, they will try for further worlds to conquer; ego knows no bounds. To men who have conquered the limitations of space, travel to its farthest limits becomes not too difficult a thing. We don't want war.

"And that, my boy, brings us directly to the matter at hand."

At last it was here. The reason!

"Viga-Va and I have decided to scotch this thing before it gets out of hand. You were the instrument chosen. You and another."

Another? I tried to think who he might be. It was a silly attempt. There were dozens of men I could think of, offhand.

As though he were reading my mind, Bordas-Ba broke in:

"No. Don't try to figure out your companion. You will know in good time. For the present, we merely wished you to know of what we intend to do. How, when, and where will be told another day. Commander, tonight, go out into the Carnival and have a good time. Enjoy to the fullest the precious hours. Dismissed."

I afose, saluted, and started for the door. Before it was quite open, Virga-Va called me:

"Commander."

I turned, my hand still on the knob.

"Wait up for me," he said.

He took my arm under his and we walked out together.

"**C**OMMANDER Hodas," he said, as we reached the street, "just what are your plans for this evening?"

I had to confess a lack of plan.

"Good!" he said. "Then you can be our guest."

He didn't bother to hear a yes or no, but took it for granted that I accepted. Of course, the thought that I might see the girl again had little to do with my acceptance. Not much!

We walked with the ebb and flow of the crowd. It was a motley crowd. Shopkeepers, fat and sleek, marched with wife and child, singular and plural, in middle-class respectability, sure of himself and his place in our society. The noble and rich were there too. Borne in palanquins which were inlaid, according to the wealth and prestige of whoever lay within, in rich metals and fine cloth. The poor also, were well-represented. They walked the very middle of the road, farmers, laborers and the like, strong, sturdy folks, the backbone of our army and air-fleet. And of the military, there were also many. It was Festival, and all were free to enjoy it this week.

"Y'know," I said as we walked along, "I'm rather proud of being chosen for this task."

"Pride, my boy," Virga-Va said in a suddenly serious mood, "is a strange word. It takes one to the brink of despair and lifts one from the depths of disaster; it makes a fool of a man, and a hero of another. Don't let it get too

strong a grip on you."

The philosophy ended on that note, for Virga-Va caught sight of a free litter bearer. In a moment we were borne aloft and carried along the fringe of the crowd. Soon we were away from the throngs of merry-makers and our runners were trotting down one of the lesser side streets where peace was the rule this day. I could see the terraces of the Plaza, and the circular central dome of the great main lodge where drink and food was to be had.

Two bands were playing in the concourse and men and women moved in the figures of the dance. The air was sweet and warm and heady as drink. I breathed it in and felt a gladness of life. Virga-Va directed the runners to take him to a terrace on the far wing of the lodge.

Here there were small circular tables at which refreshments were served under tents. And the first person I saw was the glorious beauty of the girl who had been with the Upper Commander. She caught sight of us at the same instant and she and her companion waved us greetings.

"My dears," Virga-Va said taking me directly to their table, "I want you to meet Commander Hodas, one of our finest and most capable airmen. This," he nodded toward one of the girls, "is my daughter, Lya. And this, is my daughter, Fraga."

Fraga was the one whose beauty had set me awlirl. She smiled with eyes and mouth and suddenly I was a tongue-tied youngster again, stuttering an acknowledgment. Her smile broadened but it was the main ingredient.

"Well, let's not stand about. I'm hungry. Yes, and thirsty, too," Virga-Va said.

How the time passed I don't know. I do know that every time Fraga

looked at me I flushed, stuttered and wished for the ease of manner of some of my friends. I answered in monosyllabic words, whatever questions were thrown at me by the girls, and never knew at any time whether the answers pertained to the question or not. As a matter of fact, Fraga asked once, whether I liked one lump of sigra, a sweet used to flavor our drinks, or two, and I said, "H'n. Perhaps it will not rain."

It wasn't till later in the evening, at Virga-Va's villa, that my shyness passed and I returned to a more normal ease of manner. And at the end when we had passed the greater part of the night in enjoyment of the Mummerys. I was able to laugh with the girls and be natural. Although they begged me to stay the night I had to refuse, saying that I had a room at the Air Ministry already reserved. Fraga hoped to see me again, she said.

**IT** WAS sooner than I thought. The very next day, in fact. A message arrived, asking me to appear at the office of Bordas-Ba. And when I arrived, I found not only Virga-Va but also his daughter, Fraga.

It was apparent that she was glad to see me. But before we could more than exchange greetings, than Bordas-Ba came right to the matter at hand.

"I said it wouldn't be long," he began. "And now I want you to meet your companion, Fraga, the daughter of Virga-Va."

My mouth hung down to my chin. This beauty to be my companion on a mission so dangerous. I couldn't believe my ears.

"Yes, Fraga volunteered. She has all the requisites for the mission. Besides, we have the opinion a woman and man would make a better team."

I threw the girl a quick glance from the corner of my eye. She acted as though it was the most natural thing in the world for her to be asked to the Supreme Military Commander's office. Her eyes were fixed on Bordas-Ba and I saw another facet to her beauty. The warmth was gone today; she was, if possible, even lovelier than when I had seen her last, but now it was the cold beauty of a statue.

Bordas-Ba went on:

"A short while back several cruising ray scouts intercepted a space vehicle. There were two but one escaped. At any rate, on questioning the occupants, it developed that they were from the planet, Earth, and that they were the advance guard for an entire military expedition.

"We were enabled, by *adroit* questioning," he smiled with the use of the word, and his listeners knew why. *Adroit* had other meanings. "...to establish an odd fact. That the two ships were sent for the express purpose of establishing a military liaison, but if intercepted, to pretend scientific reasons for their being on the planet, Hung-Hu."

"Hung-Hu?" I asked. "But I thought... I beg your pardon, sir."

"Quite all right. A natural assumption. No. The scouts took the ship off Hung-Hu. And that is to be your goal. For we definitely established a fact. That the ship we *didn't* intercept was to return with a tale of being fired on by enemy action, an act of war. Now we come to your mission. You, Commander, will take a fleet of ships comprising, four dreadnaughts, ten cruisers and a hundred ray fighters to Hung-Hu. There you will consolidate the garrison already activated. And if, and when the time comes that there will be an invasion, I want the battles to take place on

Hung-Hu. However, there is the fly in the ointment.

"As you know, in the ninth cycle of our existence, we established a cosmo-magnetic field across the firmament, barring all entrance past Hung-Hu, to either side. In order for invaders to win through, they would have to use our sister planet as a stepping stone. So it was that huge military establishments were erected and have been maintained since then. However, it has been a long time since the ninth cycle. And through the cycles, the commander of the garrisons has come more and more to assume despotic powers. At present, the commander there is one, Vomat. We suspect Vomat of treachery. More, we feel sure that he is awaiting the arrival of the invaders, with traitorous anxiety; I am sure he is going to make a bargain with them in return for the favor of a peaceful landing.

"Commander Hodas, it will be your prime duty to take over the garrisons, by one means or another."

"And Fraga's duty?" I asked.

"She is going to prepare the people for war. Hung-Hu is going to be our battleground."

The picture was complete for me. The details could be inked in as we went along. Nor had I long to wait for that. We had been so immersed in Bordas-Ba's tale we hadn't noticed Fraga's father's departure. He returned shortly, bearing armfuls of maps. These were spread on the great desk, Fraga and I invited to scan them, while the two men pounded information at us. I was amazed at the readiness and ease of her memory and quickness of perception. Beauty was not alone her greatest asset. She had a brain and could use it.

I was pretty well tagged after the session. Refreshments were brought

in and welcomed properly. Then, after the last map had been gone over, and the last bit of information digested, Bordas-Ba said:

"And now, Commander, and my dear, I can only wish you success, and God-speed."

**F**RAGA WAS to leave Zung-Ho on a ray scout in advance of the main expedition. It would take me several days to get my plans into action, although Bordas-Ba had made it easier by alerting all men and ships. We stood on the short flight of steps outside of the Great Hall and looked at each other. She smiled suddenly and offered her hand.

"Well, Commander, luck, and I'll be seeing you."

I acted before I knew what I was doing. I saw her eyes widen in surprise, saw her lips part, then her face filled the whole of the day, and my lips were pressed tight against hers. They were sweeter even than I had imagined them to be. Then something hit the side of my jaw, and I staggered back. Before I could recover my balance, my heel slipped off the stone and I rolled down a few steps.

I sat up and looked at the girl. Her face was twisted in anger, and I knew she had slapped me, and not lightly, either. But in a second, her face changed and laughter bubbled from her lips.

"Oh, get up!" she said. "You look so silly, sitting there. Besides, that pretty uniform's covered with dust, and you know how girls are about uniforms."

Heat lent a flush to my face. The reference to my uniform was deliberate, I knew. It was as if to say, she wasn't one to be impressed by one, and certainly not a girl to be kissed lightly.

Anger put an edge to my words:

"It wasn't the uniform that kissed you. And the next time I do it won't be the uniform, either. Only then, you'll return the kiss."

"Quite sure on that point, aren't you?" she asked. The smile was still on her lips but her eyes held glint of fire.

I came to attention, snapped a quick salute at her, turned and started down the steps. Words followed me down:

"Better practice up on your technique, Commander," she called after me. "A girl likes to *know* when she's being kissed...."

**F**OR THE next few days I was too busy to think of the girl. Bordas-Ba had placed great responsibility in my hands. Besides the war ships there was the matter of transports for the troops. I was fortunate in having a staff of able under-officers who knew exactly how I wanted things. Bordas-Ba had given me complete charge of the expedition. I was bound for it to succeed.

At last the fleet was ready. It was the dawn of a warm day on which we took off. Virga-Va and Bordas-Ba came down to see us off. The great space ships were lined up in their order at take-off point. The Command-the foot soldiers stood in rigid attention on their bridges, and outside. There were a few words from the Supreme Military Commander, a pleased look in his eyes, and he nodded his head as a signal for our start. I admitted to a heart murmur as I waved my hand for take-off.

The first of the great, silver bullets shot up into the blue, I walked up the gang plank, the great door closed behind me, and the adventure began for me...

Hung-Hu was a silver ellipse hang-

ing in space. In a few, and I knew they would be short hours, we would land on the planet. The trip had been without incident. That is *almost* without incident. For some strange reason we had lost communication with our base. Not my ship alone, but *all* the vessels. I say it was strange, not inexplicable. Such things had happened before. I felt no alarm. None of us did.

The scouts had been sent ahead. They were out of sight, flying at the speed of light in the atmosphere of Hung-Hu, their scopes and tele-ears trained on the surface of the planet. I knew there was nothing wrong. For had there been, they would have notified us.

Of course the ships were cleared for instant action. I had seen to it; I had an instinct of caution. I was on the bridge. Our armada of ships was a scythe sweeping across the sky. Very soon now we would be landing. Fi-Edda my second in command was by my side. His lips were parted in a soundless whistle and he kept shaking his head in time to a hidden tune. Fi-Edda lived for two things, music and battle. He loved both above all else. Now he stood close to the great viewer and watched the ships.

Suddenly I saw his eyes narrow, and his head bowed lower over the filter screen.

"Look!" there was urgency in his voice.

I stepped to his side and peered intently into the screen. What I saw there dropped my chin to my chest. One by one, the great cruisers and dreadnaughts fell out of the sky. It was the only way to describe what was happening. They fell, end over end, every which way, but all of them out of control. And it wasn't more than a second and the audio-system boomed an alarm from below

decks.

"Sir, I beg to report that we are out of control and falling fast...."

I GAVE orders, even though I had a suspicion that they would never be executed. Something about the way those other ships tumbled told of an agency at work greater than any we possessed. Then there was a strange feeling as if gravity had suspended its force for us. The feeling became reality. The ceiling became the floor, the walls were something we bounded against like balls, to re-bound to and against whatever object presented itself. Whatever loose things were in the room crashed against us and we into them. The crashes of falling things became louder and louder and at the end, there was a final, tearing sound as if the very insides of the ship had torn loose. I knew no more, for that sound had been the echo of something which had struck me.

"Get up!" a voice said.

"Get up, sama!"

*Snake!* Who was it dared to address me as though I were a reptile? I opened my eyes and was immediately sick. I was made sicker by a terrific kick which landed in my side and made me see stars.

"Get up!" the voice insisted.

It took all my power of will to get up on my feet. There were a half dozen armed men standing in a close circle about me. At their head was a tall man, shaven-skulled, thick-lipped and tight-eyed narrowed in hate. Those narrow mean eyes were squinting at me in appraisal.

"Who are you? I asked in meaningless question. The words were something I had to ask. My senses were aware of a dozen other things; the smell of burned flesh, the huge, crumpled mess of what had once been



a beautiful piece of engineering, bodies strewn like flotsam on a stream, over the green pastureland, and a vast sound of hammering.

Flesh stung my face and my head snapped back at the unexpected blow. I re-acted instantly, my fist smashing forward into the face of the man opposite. He reeled back and before any of the others could stop me. I was on him, smashing away with mallet blows of my fist, trying to beat the pulpy face into nothingness. It took the combined efforts of the rest to drag me from the man.

They did a pretty good job of beating me, then. I was more dead than alive when they got through and it was only the intervention of one of them that saved me. He was a thin-faced man, sharp of voice:

"Hold, At-Tata! Vomat wants him alive. He wears the uniform of a Commander."

At-Tata, the ugly one, who was the leader of the group, hated the thought of stopping them, but it was evident that Vomat's command was law. There were two of them who had hold of me so that I couldn't fight back. When they released me, I fell to the ground. And no matter the kicks, there was nothing left in me to make me rise at their command. They had to carry me.

**THEY HAD** a scout-car. I knew I was being carried, but other than that I had no consciousness of. The ride to the city was a blur of sight and sound to me.

We must have fallen a long way from the city of Halon; I was almost myself by the time we came to the outer limits of Halon, and the ride had been a long one despite the great speed at which we traveled. Physically. I was much the worse for wear, my right eye being closed entirely and my left open only a slit. I ached

in every part of me from the beating I got, and there was a constant pain in my right side where At-Tata had kicked me. Besides which, there was the torturing mental anguish of wonder at what had happened. Where were the other ships of the proud armada which had started off? Where were the men?

I realized that I had to straighten my thinking out. If I let myself brood over a something which was rank speculation I would surely go mad. Until the time came when these question could be answered, the only path for me to tread was the path of the immediate. Patience was a virtue I knew little of, but which I'd have to learn.

Slowly, I became aware of things about me. The car had slowed to a perceptible degree, from the instant it had entered the city limits. I became aware of an immense amount of military activity. Foot soldiers by the battalion marched behind massed corps of armored vehicles. Overhead, in the azure blue, squadrons of scouts buzzed in formation. And as we neared the center of the city I saw that a great guard had been thrown about the Lesser Hall of Chiefs. These guards commanded every avenue of approach. Vomat was taking no chances.

Our car skidded to a halt before one of the side entrances. Rough hands seized me and rustled me into the hall. Whatever was to happen was not to be delayed. For as we marched along, At-Tata would call to each guard that presented himself:

"A prisoner, For Vomat's questioning."

I was brought directly to the great center hall, the place of formal audience.

It was apparent to me, the instant we placed foot on the immense carpet which ran the length of the hall that Bordas-Ba's reports of Vomat were true. The hall was empty of the usual

crowd of courtiers, sycophants, palace strumpets, and hanger-ons. Armed guards stood at attention to either side of the long carpet. And at the far end, on the dais, were clustered a group of men about the central figure of Vomat.

I recognized him, though it had been years since I'd seen him; so long ago in fact, I had been a stripling cadet at a court function and he was already Vice-Commander. As we came close enough for a good view, I saw he had changed but little. Perhaps the years had added a little weight to his middle, taken some of the hair from his head, placed a few more lines of depravity on his face, but all in all, he was Vomat, the sensuous, treacherous, brave yet cowardly Vomat I had met that one time.

**A**S WE MARCHED up the carpet all eyes turned in our direction.

We stopped at the very foot of the dais. At-Tata and his men came to attention, and after a wave of Vomat's hand in acknowledgement of At-Tata's salute, At-Tata said:

"We found this one, sire, to be alive. We would have put him to death as you ordered the rest done, but he wore the uniform of a Commander, and remembering your orders, I had him brought here."

Vomat shook his head a few times, and all the while his wide-set, pale eyes regarded me in fixed, hypnotic glance.

"Rather young to be a Commander," he said at last. "Certainly too young to die."

I started to say something, but he waved a be-ringed hand at me and continued:

"I know, I know. You're not afraid to die. But the only death you know of is the martial death; the sound of trumpets, a song on the lips and the glory of riding a plane out of the sky. Well, those deaths are quick, and I

suppose painless. The death which lies in store for you is anything but painless, and certainly inglorious. So we'll dispense with the heroics and get down to business.

"Bordas-Ba sent you here!"

It wasn't a question. It was a statement. I smiled up at the man. His belly heaved in a silent laugh and he shook his head.

"I wonder why the poets find youth the best time of a man's life?" he asked in surprise. "To me, oh, well. No matter, Hara-Ha!"

An immense copper man, naked to the waist, his reddish skin gleaming with oil, his shaven skull round as a ball, and the wide flat face with its slitted nostrils and mouth and pendant flapping ears, came striding out from somewhere behind the massive curtain behind the throne. A whip was in his hand. I'd never seen a whip like the one he carried. It was all of fifty feet long and at its end was divided into a dozen lashes each tipped with metal.

I recognized him as a whipman from the lower rim country of my planet, and a thrill of horror raced down my spine. I had seen how those whips were used and what a man looked like after a session. My spittle was cotton, soaked in acid.

"Whip him for me," Vomat said. Just like that. No warning no chance to reconsider, just, "Whip him!"

I saw him shake the length of whip out, whirled and started down the length of carpet. There was a singing sound and a dozen knives buried themselves in my body, wrapped themselves around me, and made me helpless prisoner. I tried to tear myself loose, but he was stronger than I and slowly and relentlessly, he dragged me back.

The breath was whistling in my throat long before I was where he

wanted me. I stood free of the lash; they manage somehow to loosen the thongs without coming into contact with their victim, and shook as though with the ague.

Once more the cold, dispassionate voice boomed:

"Whip him!"

**B**UT BEFORE the copper man put the command into effect, I shouted:

"Wait!"

Vomat's hand shot up, halting the whip.

"Well?"

"If I die," I said, speaking slowly, laboriously, "you gain nothing."

He leaned forward and cupped his broad face in a palm, and regarded me coldly. I went on:

"You want something of me. I may give it to you. But first, your word, I do not die."

Once more his belly heaved in silent laughter. His eyes narrowed and lost themselves behind, fleshy, hairless lids. Suddenly he sat bolt upright and said:

"My word! Talk!"

"Aye. Bordas-Ba sent me. You knew that. Did you think we came on a tour? Your treachery is already known. You have won the first round, but only the first round...."

"As easily the last as the first," Vomat said tonelessly. "It was quite simple, wasn't it?"

I thought quickly. It wasn't possible that every ship had been wrecked. Surely one of the scouts, seeing what was happening, was able to escape. After all, there was a limit to the device they used, a ceiling.

"Somewhere at this moment," I said, "a scout is winging his way home with news of what happened. Don't be fool enough to think that all the ships fell into the net. And

when that scout arrives, all hell is going to break loose for you. We were but a sample of what Bordas-Ba is going to send. And this time he'll be warned of what may happen, and being warned, will take steps against you."

"You talk, but say nothing," Vomat said.

"What do you want me to say?"

"Were there any others sent here? How many and when?"

I let my face fall. "No," I said in a low voice. "It was assumed that we would be enough."

It was hard to figure out what went on behind those cold eyes, impossible to figure the thoughts of this animal-face. The heavy lines never changed their expression. When he lifted his face from the cupped palm it seemed as if with great effort. He turned and whispered something to a uniformed man at his side. The other nodded soberly and silently. Then Vomat gave orders:

"Take him away. Put him with the others. I'll want to see him again. Make sure he's secure. Go!"

I was glad to get out... alive. I knew it was only Vomat's whim which made it so. And at the same time I realized my helplessness. As they marched me off through a side door and down a flight of stairs I contemplated the future with misgivings. Their very contempt of me was a sure sign of their strength. And as we marched along, I in the center, surrounded by the half dozen same men who had taken me prisoner, I tried to analyze the situation.

The curtain of force which had caused our engines to fail, would not long be a puzzle to our scientists. If, as I reasoned, one of the scouts escaped, the flyer would make a report on what happened to the others. Res-

cue might not come immediately but come it would. And when Bordas-Ba sent another expedition, it would not be a mere token force. I was sure of one thing. He wasn't going to make a battle field of his planet. Zung-Ho was to be safe.

Now, however, that the first shock of what had befallen me was over, I began to wonder about my friends and companions. Was I the only one alive? Surely some of the others escaped. But the words of At-Tata.. No! He knew only of myself and the cruiser I was on. Our instruments had been set for the port of Halon. I knew some of the others had other goals for I was the one who had laid the plans of landing operations. What of them?

"All right, you," a voice broke in on me. "In there."

**WE** HAD come to a halt in front of a *duro* metal door, barred and closed. A fetid odor made itself felt and clogged my nostrils. It smelled as if a hundred animals had lived within its precincts, and the keeper had never cleaned their pen. So this was to be my prison.

One of the guards slipped a large key into the keyhole, turned it and the door swung open on creaking hinges. My arms were pinioned to my side and before I could try to prevent them, they had shoved me across the threshold. The door was slammed shut with a sound as of doom.

It was quite dark; the only light seemed to come from the passageway we had just quitted, and there were no windows in the cell. But if my sense of sight was dulled by the gloom my sense of hearing wasn't. Almost instantly I heard scurrying sounds, tiny whimpers of noise, as of little animals hurrying to escape man. But I knew different. The prisons of Hung-Hu were the same as

those on my planet. Perhaps the animals were different in their physical makeup, but I had an idea that they would re-act in the same way. A cold sweat broke out on my face.

I must have stood in the same frozen position for a long time, because after a while my eyes accustomed themselves to the semi-darkness. Then I saw the pairs of gleaming flames which were the eyes of tiny animals, and soon I made some of them out. They were quite small; I recognized them all right. They were *terras*!

My uniform suddenly felt tight. I know my hand trembled as I lifted it to loosen the collar.

The squealing had stopped. My head swivelled from side to side as I perceived more and more of the evil-smelling creatures scurry out of their holes. I backed up until my shoulders were against the bars of the cell. And there I stood, waiting for their attack. For I knew it wouldn't be long in coming. First one would come forward, inquisitively. He would sniff at my feet, and suddenly the tiny tusks would sink. Ah! There was the first.

If only I had a small pistol, a knife, anything to make the odds even. But I had nothing except my bare hands and my feet. I kicked savagely at the small, furry body and my toe connected, rocketing him back to land with a dull thud against the far wall. In a second he was at the very bottom of a heap of his squealing fellow *terras*. I whirled on the instant, my hands shaking the cell door in a mad and futile manner.

"Let me out of here!" I screamed at the top of my lungs. "Let me out of here!"

It was then I knew I was not alone. A hundred voices answered my screams, from the long rows of cells to either side. Suddenly I felt a sharp, tearing bite at the instep of my left

foot. Savagely, I kicked backward, and pivoted at the same time. Once more there was a pile-up of bodies the second *terra* had landed. But I was only postponing my fate. I dug with frantic fingers into the pockets of my tunic. They only encountered a pad of firecobs.

Firecobs! Those tiny sticks of fire would last hours, days. And they burned with the intensity of acid.

**I** RIPPED one from the pad, struck it and hurled it into the pile at the far wall. One of them snapped at the strange thing. It was a mistake it never repeated. For it squealed in pain, the signal for the others to come to the attack. And the tiny sliver of flame burned on the stone floor. Another spotted it and stuck its tongue at it. Once more the pattern was repeated. I struck several of the pads, threw them about, and watched the *terras* scurry toward them. It wasn't long and the whole far wall became a battleground. For though the pads burned intensely they did not maim, and the cry of pain was only reflex action. It was what I had banked on. The tiny animals acted without thinking. Their ears were attuned to the sound of pain and they attacked on the instant it was uttered.

The tiny flames of the small fire-pads helped somewhat to illuminate the cell, and I saw after a while that there were no longer a great deal of the *terras*. I waited until they were in a last pile-up, then acted. I knew it would be useless to try stealth. Their hearing was too keen for that. So I took a couple of steps and leaped forward. My feet landed with terrific force on the mass of animals. Nor did I stop with that leap, but continued to jump up and down, grinding at them with my boots. Even at that, the few which were left man-

aged to almost tear the leather from the boots before I stamped the life from the last of them.

I was spent with the blind fury of my rage, and my limbs felt as if weights had been attached to them for a long time. I dragged myself back to the door and sat down against it, facing the wall. I didn't think there would be anymore of them, but I wasn't taking chances. I had only a limited supply of the fire-pads and I didn't want to waste any of them.

Now that the excitement was over, I could think clearly. So I wasn't alone in my prison. There were others. Were they friends? But of course they were, whether they were survivors of the crash or not. The very fact of their being imprisoned, made them allies.

As soon as the breath no longer whistled in my lungs I called to them. Several voices from the cell to the right of mine answered:

"Who are you?" one asked.

"How did they get you?" asked another.

And the third, "What happened?" "I'm Commander Hodas..." I began.

"Commander Hodas!" one of them yelled. "By all that's holy! We thought you were a dead one, when we saw the cruiser fall. Then the ray caught us and we started down too."

"How many of you are safe?" I asked. "And what ship are you from?"

"The Death Ride," came the answer. "There aren't too many of us. But I saw Sub-Commander Jorna being taken prisoner. I think they had orders to kill the rest. It seemed to me that only officers were taken prisoner."

"Who are you?" I continued with the questions.

"Cadet Holas-Ba, sir," was the reply.

The lowest grade of officer. I won-

dered how many of them were taken prisoner. Holas-Ba went on:

"Some of the ships escaped, sir. One of the guards let it slip in their talk. But I couldn't find out which ones. And another thing. The whole lot of us were brought here, I don't know why."

Nor did I.

"This place shouldn't be too hard to get out of, sir," Holas-Ba went on.

"What do you mean?" his words brought me bolt upright.

"I've been figuring the locks on these doors. They're the old time swivel action, mechanical. Not like the magnetic kind we have on Zung-Ho. I think I can get us loose."

"Well don't talk about it," I said. Let's have some action."

**I** DON'T know how he did it or what he used, and when the bolt on my door slid back I didn't waste time in futile questioning, but set him immediately to freeing all the rest. But first I set sentries to watch the single stairs. I started to count noses as the prisoners came from the cells but soon gave up. Vomat had done an excellent job of imprisoning all his enemies.

They were a ragged crew. But vengeance is usually clothed in rags especially when the issue is political. And these men had been mad prisoner because of differing political views.

"We'll need weapons," I said. "What chances of getting them?"

There was silence. Then one of them said in a low, reflective voice:

"If we can get free of the inner passage, I know where one of the palace armories is."

"What about the guards?" I asked.

"I don't know about the present," the man said. "And it has been a very long time I've been here..."

My mind was working like a ma-

chine.

"Do they feed the prisoners?" I asked.

"Yes! The time is soon, for that matter."

"How do they go about it? Do they choose any cell at random, or is it done systematically?"

"Of late there's been a sort of system," the man admitted. "They start with the first cell near the stair and go straight up the block. There are six of them, none armed. But a team of jet-men come with them. I've seen them because my cell was nearest the stairs. The jet-men are stationed across the stairs as a sort of bar to escape. Then the jailers began passing out the troughs."

I turned and looked the situation over carefully. This demanded planning. A single jet-rifle could cause tremendous damage. The ambush would have to be swift and sure. No slip-ups here. Most of these scarecrows wouldn't do. They were too weak, had been imprisoned too long. I needed fresh, young men. It didn't take long for me to find out Holas-Ha and I were not the only ones from my fleet taken prisoner. There were to be exact, twenty-six of us.

A strange sound made us grow mute. It was a far-away, hollow, echoing sound. Then one of the prisoners recognized it for what it was, the tramping sound of the jailers' feet. There was no time to lose.

I called the names of those men I wanted, gave them hurried directions, and told the rest to hurry back to their cells. I joined my men in the shadows beside the stairs. It wasn't long before the first of the jailers' and the jet-men appeared.

It was exactly as we had been told. The jet-men stationed themselves across the foot of the stairs, blocking them as an exit, in case of a break. Then the others, each bearing a

trough of food, which even at a distance I could have smelled, started for the cells at the far end of the block. Since there were cells to either side of the corridor, it took all of the jailors on duty. I was more than glad to see that. It made our work easier.

Nor did I waste time. I knew there was a moment when any guard's manner is at ease, that instant when he least expect anything. I tried to gauge the exact instant.

**M**Y HAND swept down, and my voice called the signal. We no longer cared about secrecy. Damn them! I was the first out. There was the damnedest silly expression on the face of the man facing me. He was a big brute! But I didn't care. He was slow bringing the gun up and my hands were a pair of pistons, the right one crashing against his jaw with terrific force, and the left, an instant later smashing into his belly. The gun never got any higher than his belly. He folded over my left like I had chopped him in two. A second right smash finished the issue. He rolled and fell away from me to the floor. I turned and saw that two of the other guards had gone down under the onslaught of my men. But the third had somehow managed to sidestep those set on him. He was standing profile to me, the deadly jet-rifle already at his shoulder. Another second and the terrible heat would make charred embers of us. I didn't take time out to think. Two quick steps and I was coming in in a low dive for his feet. The rifle went off a bare second after I hit him, but the blast of heat was sent sideways and upward.

He went down like a poled animal, and he hadn't quite hit the floor and a dozen men were piled on top.

By the time I got up the situation

was in our hands. The jailors, stupid men, chosen for their brutal ways, had been overpowered and placed in one of the cells. The jet-men were put into another cell after we had appropriated their weapons. For the first time since I had landed on Hunh-Hu, I felt a semblance of my old self.

I called the prisoner who knew of the armory, to my side.

"Think you can lead us to it?"

I asked.

He shook his head.

"What about these here?" I asked, shrugging toward the men in the cells.

"Let them yell," he said. "No one will bother coming after them. At least not for a while."

There was muted laughter from some of the men. But I had things to do and places to go. I called them to order quickly, shooting orders at them, getting them excited, making them aware of the importance of action.

I detailed four men, each armed with a jet-rifle, for the advance patrol. I and the guide followed directly behind. Then came the biggest part of the rest, and at the end, another four who would give warning if we were discovered and attacked from the rear.

I thought we were going back the way we came, but the prisoner led us toward the fat shadows at the end of the cell block. There were a barred door at the farthest end. But though it was barred, it was also open. And beyond it was a narrow corridor which ended on another flight of steps. These led downward. We were told to be cautious in our descent, and quiet. He thought there might be guards down there, though he didn't know.

**T**HE STAIRS were quite steep and long, and straight. I looked back

as we reached the bottom and saw the last of my men just starting down. Here it was light. But the light showed only the damp walls of an underground passage. And once more a barred door at the end of the passage. I waited until we had all assembled. I looked questioningly at our guide. He smiled re-assuringly and said:

"Beyond the door is the armory. And more, an exit to the open. Once I was here. Then there were no guards because this armory was used only by the palace guard. Now, I don't know."

"Well, boys," I said to the men with the jet-rifles, "it might be up to you. We can't afford a long engagement. Try to get it over with as quickly as possible."

They grinned assurance at me, lights glinting devilishly in their eyes. It was apparent they were ready for anything and sort of hoping there might be trouble. I was sure they had in their mind friends and companions on the ships of war which had been sent to such an ignoble end. At any rate they waited with impatience for me to open the door.

..We looked at each other, the guide and I.

The rest of the men crowded through the door and spilled into the wide room on which the door had opened. And in all their eyes was the same wonder which I knew lay in mind. The room looked like it had been swept by fire. The very walls were blackened, and I realized that whoever had done the job had plenty of time to do it. Not a stick, beam, wooden wall was left standing. And when our guide stepped to what was now the shell of the armory, he gestured for me to come close.

"Look!" he said, and pointed to the interior.

I saw them but couldn't comprehend their meaning. Bones! Then I saw the twisted shapes were the bones of men. Not a few. Hundreds!

"An execution chamber!" I said.

He nodded somberly.

"But why raze the room?" I asked.

He shrugged off the question.

"And where are the weapons?"

I continued.

Once more he shrugged.

The devil with it, I thought. The answer lay somewhere. What I wanted was to get out of this. I took the guide by the shoulder and said:

"This can wait. How do we get out of here?"

He waved his hand and we started off again. We came to a blank wall. Here the passage narrowed but continued to the left. We walked an interminable distance, turning with new angles, meeting other walls, but always the narrow damp passage led on. I became aware of growing light. And then he saw it. A square of sunlight. It grew larger, brighter, and our footsteps hastened into a trot.

It was amazing to me. Nothing barred the huge arch which was the exit or entrance to the underground passage. Anyone could enter or leave without a care about guards. I saw why the sunlight was so strong here. It was setting. Already the purple shadows were long near the wall.

Wall! Why we were at the very boundry of the city. Beyond the wall which confronted us was freedom. The underground passage had been dug through the whole of the city. I had already guessed its purpose, escape for whoever was ruler in time of emergency.

Some of the men hadn't waited but had scaled the wall. One of them gestured for me to climb beside him. Several of them helped me up and I lay on the rough stones and looked



toward the city. There was a wild activity to be seen. It seemed to me that the entire garrison of Hung-Hu had been called into Halon. I hoped so. I didn't want a stray patrol to meet us.

**I**T WASN'T long before the rest found their way to our side. And still I didn't go over as some did. I had seen something peculiar which took my sudden interest. The plaza was not too far for me not to be able to distinguish shapes. And there were things there to be observed. For one thing, there was a cluster of strange space ships, balls of gleaming metal, which were not of our design. But the men who streamed from these ships were too far off for me to make out. I bit my lips in frustration. If only I had a means of getting back to I had a means of getting back to Zung-Ho!

But on the other side of the wall was green pastureland. And somewhere out there in the purple twilight shadows might be refuge and a means of escape from Hung-Ho. Reluctantly, I dropped to the far side and joined my companions.

And once again the guide proved of assistance.

"Look you, Commander," he said, taking my arm. "It is obvious to me and the rest that Vomat does not like you. I am not of the military but I can recognize the uniform of the mother planet. Therefore he has rebelled against it.

"But not all of Hung-Hu is of his opinion. There are men who would fight *against* him...."

I was all attention.

"...We, for example. There is not a single one of us who has not a grudge against the man. Hung-Hu is large and the great cities far between. A short journey off are the mountains of the Stars, high and inacces-

ble to those who do not know the trails. I know the trails, I and several of my friends. Look. Night has fallen. It will not be long before they will have discovered our escape.

"We are but a short time from friends. Will you come with us?"

There were twenty seven of us from Zung-Ho in this unfriendly land. Here was the hand of friendship.

"How many of us go?" I asked. There was a reason for my asking. If, somehow we managed a ship, it might have to be a large one if there were too many, and those are not to be found easily.

Those expressive shoulders heaved again. He looked silently about him. Of the hundred or so who had found freedom with us, almost half threw in their lot with us. One by one the others left singly and in groups, until there was none left.

**I** SHOOK my head as we started out. We were a mob. I couldn't see our way clear to escape. Nor was it long before my fears were realized.

We hadn't gone far; there was a bright satellite glow, and the path was broad and clear and plain to be followed, when we came to a crossroad, or rather path, which bi-sected ours. Before we could stop we met a small squad of men coming at right angles to us. We didn't need the reflection of light on their jet-rifles to know they were a patrol.

It was only fortunate that I had sent the four with the rifles ahead as an advance guard. They didn't wait for questions or passwords. The blast of their guns wiped the patrol from the face of the earth.

And this time I took command.

"We can't go on like this," I said. "Why they could hear us all the way in Halon! Are you the only one

knows the way?"

"Belas is of my land," the guide said. "And so is Goro and Felas and Goro-Or and...."

"Enough," I said. "Let those who know the way step forward."

There were ten of them.

"Good!" I said. "Now each of you take seven men to guide. We will take different routes... Can that be done?"

"...Excellent!" I said as there was a chorus of agreement. "You all know our goal?"

Once more there was agreement.

"Then each take his squad. There won't be enough rifles to go around. Therefore whichever squad goes by the most perilous way, take one of the rifles. And, a last word. Sell your lives as dearly as possible if chance wills you are stopped."

We were the last to go. Our guide, whose name was Hora, nodded in satisfaction as he watched them depart.

"They are good men," he said. "Do not worry about them. They will win through. Besides, I am taking the only hard road. The forest land, my friend, is full of peril. But at least it isn't man-made."

He set off without another word, nor were the charred things lying in the road, once men, even given a second glance. They could no longer do us harm. As we marched along I looked speculatively at our guide. Hora was not a young man. It was to be seen in the white of his beard, which was shaggy, ill-kempt; it was to be seen in his face, full of wrinkles, and dirt, as though water and he had known a long-standing enmity; it was to be seen in his hands bony wrinkled as only age can wrinkle and last in his stooped body. But the man had a will of iron. For his step never faltered, and though we were soon in the depths of the

forest, he skipped lightly along the trail as the youngest.

Hunger was gnawing a hole in my belly before he called a halt. The forest stretched its strength over us, a warm dank blanket of green. We had refreshed ourselves at a brook we had come across. But it was food we wanted. We sat or leaned against the boles of trees, breathless, lax-bodied, tired of soul. Only Hora seemed to have energy. He moved about, the thin nostrils twitching like an animal's on a scent.

**S**UDDENLY his nervous steps slowed and I saw him nod his head as though he were satisfied with his thoughts. He turned, spotted me and came directly to me. A laugh rumbled in his belly as he leaned against the tree.

"Hunger burns, eh, lad?"

I spread my hands in acquiescence.

"Well, I think it won't be long before our bellies are fed. I smelled smoke; it was quite strong which means there is a hut along here, somewhere. Ho! Ho! And I have an idea who lives in it. I think we're going to have sport. Ho! Ho!"

His laugh was a hoarse sound of unholy glee. His rasping voice brought the rest of the men running. One of them said with impatience:

"Well, old one! Let's not stand around and talk about it! My gut feels like it's tied to my backbone by wire."

"Not so fast, drool-mouth! There are things there which sting one... The darkness is better for our purpose."

"Darkness!" another yelled. "And what do you call this, this damned tunnel we're in? The open road?"

"Patience," Hora said. "But it is not to be expected of youth. A little while, and hunger fights better.

Besides, I want to plan how we move."

My men's impatience was as nothing compared to mine, yet I had to act the leader. What Hora said was wise. If I got his meaning clear, this hut was an outpost of sorts and would undoubtedly have guards, who, of course would be armed. Discretion in this case would prove the best part of valor.

No matter how slowly time passes, there comes the end to any wait. In this case I had no idea how long we waited. But I do know my body had made an imprint on the soft ground by the time Hora gave us the sign.

"Now carefully, men," he cautioned. "These guards were picked as much for their woodman senses as for any other reason. And it is said they can hear the shift of a wind."

Oh fine, I thought. My men were city folk, and though highly trained, a forest was something which was used only for purposes of picnicking, as far as they were concerned. Now Hora was telling them to tread lightly. Even I, though perhaps not so clumsy as the rest, knew I could not trip the light fantastic over these fallen branches and dried moss.

My thoughts continued to run in the same vein as Hora began to pick his way through the forest. It seemed to me he went deeper and deeper into the underbrush and at times it was just a fight to advance a single step against the tangled growth of creeper and fallen trunks. Yet, somehow, we managed through sheer use of muscle and will, to struggle through until the next entrapment.

And always, his warning, peevish and embittered:

"Take it easy, men. You sound like a group of armored cars. Easy! Softly!"

As suddenly as if a screen were

removed, was how we came to our goal. In one second we were in the forest primeval, the next it had ended on an abrupt note of nothingness and a broad expanse of tended lawn and flowing meadow met our startled glance. Hora, in the lead, raised his hand for a halt. We crowded around and he gave us the lie of the land.

"Sec," he said, a bony finger marking the low, wide house set in its smooth bed of grass. "There it is, just as I told you. Now you understand why it had to be nightfall before we could do anything about it?"

I UNDERSTOOD. We would be setting birds for them. There wasn't the smallest hint of cover. And now my anxiety to get to the work at hand was greater than ever. For behind, though not directly, was a smaller construction. I'd seen those hangars before. They were made to house two seater ships, usually used for observation purposes.

"We'll have to separate," Hora said. "We have a jet-rifle man who will have to do the most part of the work. If you'll look closely, you'll see the house is built of perma-brick, impervious to jet-fire. Somehow, they'll have to come out into the open. One or two of us will have to play decoy."

I went on, taking over:

"Right! There are none of us armed except Usap. Deception's the note. Our uniforms are dark, which is to our advantage. There are eight of us. Two of us to a compass point. Hora and I will take the rear. I think the little place is a hangar...."

When I finished, they all nodded soberly. It was a dangerous undertaking and we all knew death was all about. There couldn't be a single mis-step.

Hora and I having farthest to go,

started out first. It was belly-crawl all the way, first along the tall grass which skirted the edge of the forest from which they'd practically hewed their way, and later into the shorter grass. Hora was like a samba for all of his years. I was tired after the first bit of crawling. But I bit my lip and continued after the old man.

Now and then I'd look up at a cloud-filled sky. We had the fortune of not having the strong searchlight of the satellite's rays giving us away. Excitement lends wings to time. For suddenly there was the shadow of the hangar almost sticking in my face. I had lost Hora almost from the instant of our start. I knew though, that he was not far off. I stretched out straight, lifted myself on my elbows and peered at dim shape ahead.

"Not guarded," a voice said seemingly from the earth at my side.

I let out a startled grunt, but a hiss of warning told me the voice belonged to Hora.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Because there is no guard in front."

Well, if you ask a foolish question I suppose it's fair to get a foolish reply.

"What do we do now?" I asked.

"Wait for the fun to start. Their attention will be drawn to the front. Then will be our chance," Hora said.

Nor had we long to wait. We had timed it perfectly. It wasn't but a few breaths later that the cry for help came from somewhere to our right. And as we peered through the knee-high grass, we saw a figure striding for the main hut.

Things moved at a furious pace then. I saw the door flung open and someone challenge the voice which had come out of the darkness and the reply. I waited no longer. With all speed I rose and dashed for the

hangar, Hora at my heels. It was just as he had said, unguarded. It took a second to get the doors open. I couldn't take a chance and risk a light. But I didn't need one. My hands went to the chucks under the wheels, and Hora, as though he done it a thousand times before ran to the tail assembly. I joined him, and between us we got the ship moving. It was larger than I had thought, large enough to take four men. Yes, I thought, and at a pinch large enough to take us all.

It was then I knew Hora's worth. As soon as we wheeled the ship out-side, he clambered in. I looked at him seated at the controls, his hands busy at something. He waved furiously at me and I stepped forward. When I saw what he had done, I felt a wide grin rise to my lips. The old coot had somehow learned that there were sidearms in the ship, dis-guns. He tossed me a couple and scrambled from the ship.

**I**N THE meantime I had been listening for the sounds of combat out front. But either the ruse had succeeded or I had missed something. Nothing but silence greeted our attention.

"I don't like it," he whispered at my side.

"Nor do I," I said. "Let's take a look."

There's something odd about having a dis-gun in one's hand. It immediately gives a sense of security to one's movements. Now we both walked erect. Not a soul was to be seen. Something warned me to be careful. And though the door was wide open, and light streamed out, we sidled along the wall until I, in the lead, stuck only enough of my head out to enable me to see within. There were the men; no not all, there

were three missing. They stood against a far wall, hands over their heads, and facing them were three of Vomat's uniformed guards. In their hands were dis-rifles. And the rifle's ugly snouts were pointed with deadly intent at the prisoners.

One of the guards was talking:

"I asked where that man got the jet-rifle?"

There was no reply to his question. Now the voice snarled:

"Surely brutes. I'll teach you...."

There was an odd clicking sound. I should have acted then, for I recognized the sound. It was that of a dis-rifle being set for a charge. Then there was tiny, *whish* of released air and the nearest man simply vanished.

I didn't hesitate then. Nor was Hora long behind. I stepped into the room. The guards must have guessed my entrance by the prisoner's expression for they whirled on the instant. But they were too late. Both Hora's and my guns spoke together. There wasn't enough of the guards left to raise a small pile of dust.

"There's a couple of more around somewhere," one of the men said.

"Then let's be on our way," I said. "I've got the ship out of the hangar."

"**T**HERE!" Hora yelled in my ear, his finger straight out pointing toward a group of what looked to be mounds struck in the middle of the plain.

I circled slowly, and as we swept in to a landing, I saw they weren't mounds at all but huge tents, the largest I'd ever seen. I swallowed hard when I saw what came running from those tents. They were the largest females I'd ever seen, the smallest well over eight feet in height. The instant the ship came to

a standstill they had us surrounded. And again it was Hora who rose to the occasion:

"Manda-Ma!" he shouted.

The tallest, ugliest of them stepped forward, a scowl on her flat features.

"Who calls Manda-Ma?" she asked in a voice which would have done credit to a bass-singer.

"Hora," Hora said. "Look closely."

The immensity stepped closer, suddenly reached out two hands which were like giant ladles and scooped Hora up and held him close to where her near-sighted eyes could make his features out.

"Ah!" she shouted. "It's the little old one! He has come back. Good! Now we will have a feast."

There was welcome in her voice but I didn't quite know how she meant it. Cannibalism still existed in remote parts of this planet. And we were without a doubt in the most remote part. For where Hora had directed me proved to be a sort of plateau set in the midst of high mountain ranges. I was still in the dark as to his reason for coming here.

Manda-Ma set Hora down, then, with him at her side, and the other women following, all chattering at the tops of their lungs, they started out for the largest tent. I and the rest of my men followed, but at a respectable distance. It was as if we weren't along, so little attention did they pay us.

We couldn't quite make it. The tent just wasn't that large. Hora shouted for some of them to make room for us. And Manda-Ma belled for them to do as Hora said. The women shoved us forward and although it was good-naturedly, their push felt as if a ship had done it. There was a rude platform at one end of the tent; I imagine Manda-Ma used it for purposes of audience.

Here, Hora and the monstrous woman stood. They waited for my men and I to step up.

Then Hora started to talk:

"Mighty Manda-Ma! I bring news of things to come. In the far and great city of Hung-Hu, Vomat has taken power. Here, he has assembled all the warriors of this great land. From the far corners all the space ships have been assembled. From the deepest parts of the jungle, from the highest mountains, the men have flocked to his bidding.

"Why? Because women of Hin, from space's darkness has come a mighty host of men in strange and fearsome space ships to do harm to the great mother land of Zung-Ho. Here beside me stands one who came to bring Vomat to trial. Instead, he himself was taken prisoner, and is now a fugitive from the traitor, Vomat.

"There is no way for Vomat and his hosts to reach Zung-Ho except by going through the land of Hin. There, at the farthest end where the rim country can be used for space ports, is where his space battleships can take off. I have traveled far and weariedly only to tell you of this. I cannot make you do battle. Nor can I tell you that you will win, for in all truth, you cannot. Vomat has the weapons of the very Devil himself to use. And against him...."

"Against him," Manda-Ma shouted, "will march the women of Hin! Ever have we been the greatest warriors in all this world. With or without weapons. Only tell me how soon the usurper marches."

Hora closed his eyes. I knew his answer had to be a guess. But I also knew he had to give an answer, right or wrong. After a short pause, he opened the wrinkled old lids, and said:

"Ten times will the moon set. On the eleventh day, the first of the host will appear."

The great ugly face of the monstrous woman lit up in joy. An animal sound welled from the muscled throat. And suddenly from her lips came a great shout to be instantly echoed from the collective throats of all the others.

It was the war cry of the women of Hin!

I HAD HEARD of these famous women warriors. This was the first time I'd ever seen them, and they were every bit as formidable as was their reputation. But reputation alone was not to stop Vomat. There had to be more practical means. What about their weapons, I thought? In the meantime the din in the tent increased. The shouts died down but a sort of chant began. The chant rose and fell in studied cadences and a slow dance took place before the platform on which we stood. It was no more than a swaying of the huge bodies and a stamp of the feet. But there was something wild and exhilarating about it. As abruptly as it had begun, the dance and chant stopped.

Manda-Ma waited until the last sound had died on the still air. Then she began to issue orders for food to be brought forth. In a short while the tent was emptied of women. Only Manda-Ma remained. Events had been moving too swiftly for me to keep pace with them. Now that they had come to a standstill, I was able to see clearly again. She had moved to a pallet in a corner. It seemed to be a chair also. For she sat down and motioned for us to come close. Even sitting she was still taller than some of us.

And smarter than most. So I dis-

covered.

"Well," she began, "now that they are gone we can talk. What is this you talk of, Hora?"

How Hora knew about the Earthmen while he was languishing in prison I never knew. But he seemed to be as well-informed about them as Bordas-Ba. Even better. For he knew of their arrival, while to us that was a matter of conjecture.

The giantess shook her head in somber thought as he nailed home the predicament our system was in if the Earth hordes with Vomat's aid prevailed. My eyes widened as he enumerated the weapons they possessed; atom bombs, death rays, ships which flew with the speed of light. Even I, proud warrior of a proud warrior race, felt a faltering in my thoughts. True, our armament was equal to theirs. Or was it?

I looked to the woman, who suddenly shook a finger in Hora's face.

"Wait!" she said. "I must have a little time to think. Time is going to be our most important ally! Let us place ourselves in Vomat's shirt. He has to get his men and material to the rim country. He knows that. Then by the same token he also knows that he must cross my land. And that he cannot do without a fight. Therefore he had made provisions for it.

"We must not fight him here."

"B-but where then?" Hora stutered.

She slapped her palms together. They made a sound as of wood being pounded by wood. Her face made weird grimaces which made it all the more ugly. But all the time her brain was busy.

"There is only one place. On the plains of Zung," she said at last.

That was a name strange to me. But if it was to me, it wasn't to

Hora. His eyes widened, and suddenly he burst into his hoarse cackle of mirth.

"By all that's holy! Manda-Ma, you're the wisest and ugliest woman in all the world! The plains of Zung. Only you, you old she-devil could have thought of that place."

It was gibberish to me. Where and what were the plains of Zung?

Hora turned to me, his wrinkled face made more wrinkled by the wide grin which split the lips.

"Ho! Ho! The plains of Zung! But let me tell you of that wilderness. Only the women of Hin, I and nobody else, know of that morass. Try to picture a stretch of land which from end to end looks like the finest pastureland in the world; why the grass is so green it looks good enough to eat . . ." he let his voice rise in almost poetic frenzy. . . "and there are even animals feeding in spots. But what the onlooker doesn't know is that the plains of Zung are a delusion and snare. If only her plan works and Vomat doesn't ask himself why she doesn't try to defend her city."

**I** HAD THE picture all right. Vomat was bound to have heavy equipment with him; certainly there would be several corps of armored stuff. But the biggest headache as far as I was concerned was the question of the space ships. How were they to be disposed?

That question seemed to bother Manda-Ma also. She spoke her thoughts aloud:

"There is a question, old one. The question of his ships. It would be the simplest matter to fly over my city and with a single bomb, blow it from the face of the Earth. Now what are we to do about that? After all, in the cities there are means of

getting around that. But not here. I have no interceptor rays, no atomic rifles I can use against aircraft, no dis-guns...."

"And that's why he won't bother," I heard myself say. For suddenly a picture of Vomat came to mind; wily, clever, smooth, egotistical, vain Vomat, "He's thinking of the greater glory of destroying Zung-Ho. What's more, I think he's using these Earthmen to his own ends. Why fight Zung-Ho? They boast of their power, which means they boast of their glory; the wonder of their own planet. Why should he risk oblivion, which after all, he can only end up with in a struggle with Bordas-Ba, no matter what his initial advantage?"

This time the silence was pregnant with new thought. And, as before, was broken by the woman:

"The young one speaks wisdom. I have met Vomat only once. But it is as though he were Vomat's twin, so well does he know him. However, let's go the one step further. Bordas-Ba knows by now what has happened. Therefore, or rather, let's assume Vomat knows Bordas-Ba knows. What-meaning will that have for him? The same meaning we can attach to it. Bordas-Ba will attack.

"But what will he attack? Now we place ourselves in Vomat's shirt. If Bordas-Ba is allowed to land on this planet it will take only a short while before Vomat dies. But if Vomat delays him...?"

"So," I said, taking it from there, "he is going to send a large token force to intercept Bordas-Ba. All this will take a little time, on both sides; military affairs because of their scope have to be done slowly. As you say, time is to our advantage. Now why is Zung so important? What makes you think there will be

a battle there?"

"That is where the barrier ends," Hora explained. "In order for Vomat to send his forces out into space he must first provide them with a springboard. Zung is the springboard."

"But if it is a morass the ships will be mired," I said.

"Only in the arc to its outer limits. There he will find enough room. Now you understand why the women of Hin must fight him there," Hora said.

I understood. But I also saw something else. I wasn't needed there. I could be of more use back in Hung-Hu. And oddly enough, they agreed. Besides, as Manda-Ma pointed out, I had a ship of Vomat's which would not be intercepted. We could land wherever we wished. But first, food.

**THIS TIME** we entered Hung-Hu in the normal way, through one of the city gates. Our uniforms were no different than any of the others to be seen. Of course we had stripped our identifying tabs from them. It was the one chance we had to take. And it was a pretty safe bet that no one would challenge us.

We were fairly well-armed. I let two of my men carry the dis-guns and another the jet-rifle. Before we left Hora assured me he would see to it that if any of my men came through who went with the other parties, he would let them know our whereabouts.

The city had lost its air of chill expectancy. The die had been cast. I marched along with my men, all of us keeping a keen eye out for patrols. Deserters were to be expected and I knew there would be efforts to round them up. I didn't want us picked up.



A wine shop's welcome shade was crossed. We retracted our footsteps. Here there was a certain haven of refuge which would not be violated. We were not the only ones in uniforms. The place was full of soldiers and flyers. We found a table not too far from the exit and along the wall. Those within were too busy in their drinks to pay us any heed.

A waitress came over, a rough creature, with raven locks, which tumbled about a savage face, which was distinguished by the dirt which covered it. She asked our desires and we ordered drinks. I was thankful the currency we had was universal in use.

She returned in a few minutes and slammed the tankards down on the table. One of them missed my fingers, lying on the table, by the merest bit.

"Careful there," I said.

"Careful yourself, fool," she spat at me. "Who do you think you're talking to, some fancy woman from the Plaza?"

"If you'd wipe the dirt from your face," I said, "I might be able to answer that remark."

And for the second time in my life, a woman slapped me. Only this time my hand was quicker than the first. I grasped her hand before it had quite left my cheek and pulled her toward me.

"Dirt or otherwise," I said, "I'm going to kiss you for that."

Her lips were surprisingly sweet to mine, and wonderously responsive. I felt heat rise to my brain.

"Did you like that one?" she asked. And turning, walked away.

I laughed with my companions and started to drink the wine. The tankards almost dropped from nerveless fingers as the meaning of her remark dawned on me. I had never

kissed her before....The waitress was Fraga!

"Quick men," I urged. "Finish up and order another."

They weren't fools. The wine was excellent, and they were quick to take advantage of my offer. The waitress came to the pounding of the tankards.

"Come, come," I said. "A little more service."

**S**HE HAD anticipated our wants and had brought full tankards. Mine was the last to serve. And that was served in my lap. I was sure it was done deliberately. She gave an exclamation of disgust, directed oddly enough at my clumsiness. She bent over the table, produced a rag from under the string of her apron and proceeded to wipe the wine. She made no small matter of what she thought of me and my companions and *all* the other customers.

There was a large puddle of the sticky liquid directly in front of me. She moved around until she was standing at my shoulder. And another *accident* occurred. The rag flew from her fingers and joined the wetness in my lap. Once more she complained of her treatment, while she hurriedly picked the rag up, but not before she had managed to pinch my thigh. I reached to soothe the aching spot and felt a square of folded paper. So the business of spilling the wine had a purpose behind it.

While the others joked and drank, I unfolded the note and read it:

*"Darling! I have news for you. Three doors beyond the wine shop is a pastry shop. I eat there. I won't be long."*

Nothing wasted. Right to the point. Dear Fraga. I gave my men hurried orders, left enough to cover their drinks plus a tip for Fraga and left.

There were only a few customers in the pastry shop. I found a table for two in a corner and waited for Fraga.

She wasn't long in coming. Her entrance was startling. She spotted me instantly and her voice was a shriek of delight, hoarse and to the point:

"Commander. You old devil! An' I thought you just having fun with little Lili."

She skipped to my side, flung her arms around me and planted a long moist kiss on my mouth. Then, as I got over my surprise, and attempted to prolong the caress, she touched me lightly with her fingers and sat next to me.

"Darling," she said. "I'm just famished. Those beasts in there work a girl to the bone. Do order."

She ate as though she were famished. I fiddled with my food, waiting impatiently for her to get through. Not until she had the last of her dessert did she talk.

Her voice was still hoarse, but low, meant only for my ears alone:

"I paid one of the girls in there to take my place; told her I had an important engagement with you, money in it. We can't talk here. But I have a room not far off. We'll have to go there."

"But my men," I objected. "What about them?"

She thought a moment, then said:

"There is a song-house in the next square. Many of the soldiers go there. Tell them to wait till you come."

**S**HE MUST have been psychic.

For the words were no sooner out of her mouth and my men made their appearance. I met them at the door on our way out and whispered what I wanted of them. They followed us at a distance and as we passed the song-house, I turned and

signalled for them to enter.

Fraga lived in a working district. We walked up several flights of stairs. She had an attic room. The single window was like an eye which could see over some of the roof tops. It served as an excellent observation post. There was no privacy, not even a screen behind which she could go to undress. She talked while she undressed before me. It was rather difficult to follow; she had a mature, voluptuous body, the sight of which gave me both embarrassment and lent desire. She, on other hand, was completely unaware of what she was doing to me. As she tossed aside one garment in exchange for another, she emphasized points:

"Now listen, darling! I've found out *everything*. All the times, I mean just when they plan to move. And Vomat's a fool! I tell you these Earth men are going to destroy *everything* ..But let me tell you what I've done.

"The first thing, it was simple to get in to the inner council after I went to work for the man in the wine shop. I heard that many of the Earth men patronized his place. So I simply came to him and asked for a job. Then I gained the confidence of some of the higher officers, learned the identities of the Earth leaders. It was a simple matter for me to meet them. They like to drink, and I guess they're not used to the potent wine we have here. For they get quite drunk quite soon!

Then they talk! Like babbling women they talk. *Everything* but. *Nothing* is left to the imagination. Vomat is being used by them. And I know for what."

I broke in:

"How do you mean, used?"

"They have an atom bomb which is the most terrible weapon ever made. Vomat told them that Bordas-Ba is

the only man that stands between them and their goal. He must be destroyed. But he is on Zung-Ho. Therefore they are going to destroy Zung-Ho."

No, I thought. You're wrong, darling. They're the fools. Vomat doesn't want Zung-Ho destroyed. He knows the penalty of being a traitor. If they have such a weapon, Vomat wants it for his own. Somehow, he's going to betray these Earth men....

"Don't look so down-at-the-mouth, darling," Fraga said. "I tell you I have the means of getting around them. We'll win out, with even a minimum of luck."

"The point, Fraga," I said impatiently. "What you've said is interesting. But what makes you think we can beat them?"

"I am having dinner with the Commander of all the Earth forces. In his apartment, tonight! He listens to me, *understand?* And tonight I will prove to him that Vomat is going to betray him."

**T**HAT KNOCKED me off my feet. And while I looked, open-mouthed at her she explained:

"I have been pretty busy. I told you that Vomat's officers frequent this place. They also tell me things. Wine is an excellent hypnotic for a pretty woman. There is a single ship which carries this weapon of the Earth men. Vomat has arranged to have *observers* aboard. They will be armed with dis-guns, hidden of course. At a signal they will attack and kill all the men on the ship and take over. Then Vomat will make for Zung-Ho."

"And," I said, "how are you going to prevent that?"

"By having you come to his place later tonight and acting as an agent. I will give you all the details. This

Smith will believe anything I say. I have his *complete* confidence. And I will tell him that you are going to be there."

By all that was holy! She *had* something there. I was already planning what to do. By this time Fraga had made a complete change. It was easy to see how she had enchanted Smith to the point where he was nothing but a babbling idiot. She was *beautiful*! I told her so. It was wonderful, the sudden softness of her eyes and the way she became a trembling child as I stepped to her side and took her in my arms.

For one trembling instant the whole world was forgotten, and in the next nothing mattered. For while I held her close, she had said:

"Oh, darling! I love you so. But first...."

**S**MITH HAD been given a country estate for his own use. Earthmen stood at all the gates and entrances. It was fortunate that my coming was expected and that the guards knew. Not even a worm could have crawled in without the password. I was escorted to the door.

Fraga and Smith were in the drawing room.

I looked at the Earthman with quickening interest. He was quite tall, lean, well-knit. But there was a wild look to his eyes, an odd trembling to his mouth, a strange manner of twisting his fingers, as if he was under great strain.

"So this is the man, eh, Fraga," he said. "Looks quite capable. Yes. Quite. Can we give him our confidence? After all, a traitor sells his soul to the highest bidder."

"Not this one," Fraga said slowly. She was sitting by the man's side, one arm thrown across the back of the low couch. "He has a personal

grudge. Vomat killed his father and brother because they were getting too strong a following. He cares for nothing except revenge."

"The best kind," Smith said grudgingly. "I like him. He is hard and tough. No softy here. Very well. I won't be long about it. No. We won't be long about it."

He resumed his seat beside Fraga, and placed an arm about her waist. She didn't show in the slightest degree that she didn't want it there. As for me, I stifled an impulse to strike him, with the utmost difficulty, and only because her eyes flashed me a warning.

"How many men do you need?" he asked.

"I have them, three. It will be quite enough."

"Good. I don't like operations which require a great deal of men. At least not in matters of this sort. Now Vomat tells me he is sending a large, tough token force to intercept this Bordas-Ba person he is expecting. Do you know where the plains of Zung are?"

I said, "Yes."

"Good. I have persuaded him to send his entire air force. We, of course will be outnumbered. But it won't make any difference, because we are going to concentrate our fire power on the ground forces. Then we will battle his airmen."

He was mad, I thought. But he went on before I could say anything:

"I don't like this at all. I had different ideas about what I wanted. But now that I'm here, I've changed my mind. I think I shall try other worlds to conquer. But first I must get back to Earth. I know now that I did not bring either enough men or materials for stellar conquest. But I digress. Now then, Hodas. I will make out a pass for you and your

men. We leave from Port I. N. 25 one hour after daybreak. Good night."

I didn't want to go and leave her with him, alone. But there was nothing to be gained by arguing or creating a fuss. It was one of those deals where she would have to take care of herself.

We were there before the time. I wanted to take a good look at these ships the Earth men came over in. They were worth my while. Our ships were designed in the form of an ellipse. The Earth ships were like silver tear drops with elongated tail assemblies. They were not so large, yet large enough to hold a thousand men each. There were an even hundred of them, all of one size.

**I** AND MY men made for Smith's ship. I showed the guards the identification Smith had issued. We were passed instantly. Smith told me there would be some waiting to show us our stations. And these same men would point out the ones whom Vomat had sent to take over Smith's ship.

We were taken directly to the control room.

The first man I saw there was Vomat! And beside him was Fraga. Both sat side by side on a low settee. And standing guard were several of the Earthmen.

"Come in Commander Hodas," a voice said. I turned and stared into the cold, unblinking eyes of the Earthman, Smith. "Now don't just stand there," he continued. "There is more room by Fraga's side."

There was arguing with the arms of the men by his side. First the disarms we carried were taken from us. Then we were shoved to the settee. I sat close to Fraga and put my arm around her waist. I could feel her

body tremble as if in chill.

Smith took the center of the floor. There was relish in his voice:

"I won't keep you in suspense. I knew of the plot against me from its beginning. What surprises me is your collective stupidity. For example, why was the question never asked, how was it we spoke your tongue so well? But no, we were accepted on face value.

"Well, to answer that one, telepathy. I knew what you were *thinking*. Yes, even what goes on in your mind now. The whole plot was laid bare and made barren by my power.

"Dear Fraga here, so lovely a child, and thinking herself so clever. Vomat with his overweening ambition, and the sub-altern, Commander Hodas. All of you! Stupid. Well, in a short while there will be an end to this stupidity. I wanted no interference, Vomat. That's why I suggested you send your forces to the rim country, wherever the devil that is. Let them and this Bordas-Ba person battle each other to doomsday. And doomsday won't be long in coming. I have decided to made an end to your silly planet.

"Yes!" his voice rose to a shout.

"I brook no interference. From no one. Let me tell you what will happen. In the bowels of this ship is the largest, most terrible of all weapons, that atom bomb. Not the ordinary kind which will destroy only part of a world. This is one devised to destroy a *whole* world. In a very short while, as soon as we have achieved enough space I will release it. See!" He stepped to the instrument panel and pointed to a lever. "I will press this. That makes the bomb live. Concussion will do the rest."

Suddenly Fraga broke in:

"And what of us?"

He smiled down at her. But there was no humor in the smile.

"My dear, did you think I'd forgotten you...and your friends? Of course not. I am going to release you, all of you. My men are bringing the space harnesses for you.

"And as soon as the bomb is released I am going to send you and your friends to the wonderful world you'd just quitted. Of course it will no longer be there. But...Dear, sweet Fraga. You won't care. You and lover will be together. Through eternity. Isn't that how you wanted it?"

(Continued On Page 138)

## "LIGHTWEIGHT"

IT IS NOW A known fact that light has mass. The Einstein theory of relativity has shown this directly. True it is hard to imagine anything so impermeable and delicate as a lightbeam having weight—but it does. While the Einstein experiment showed this through the bending of a lightbeam which passed near the huge mass of the Sun, it can be shown more directly in the laboratory.

By use of evacuated tubes carrying within them light, frictionless vanes, it is possible to demonstrate that light presses against them and sets them into motion. This does not refer to the radiometer effect which depends upon heat and air molecules.

What we are referring to is the direct

light pressure that exists. Thus *every* square foot of the Earth's surface is being acted upon by a pushing force when exposed to direct sunlight. This force is surprisingly great.

If we were able to get near the sun itself, we would find that radiation pours out from it in monstrous streams capable of knocking over a man! Sir Arthur Eddington frequently made a point of describing this unusual phenomenon. Light pressure is intense. As yet we utilize it for no practical purposes. Someday perhaps, someone will harness it, as has often been predicted in science-fiction, to drive a spaceship in order to attain unthinkable velocities. Funny, but possible, like almost any human thought!

L. Reed.

# THE ANCIENT GEOMETRICAL MONUMENT

Article 2 — Its Simile

By ROCKY STONE

(Note: This is the second of a series of articles which bring to the public an understanding of amazing discoveries which are of priceless practical value today, and which were also keyed in the ancient geometrical monument, whose base cornerstone has been called for centuries the Great Pyramid.)

IN ARTICLE 1 it was shown how and why those mental giants of long ago picked and chose the particular general form for their ancient geometrical monument. It was also shown that the base cornerstone of this monument is a truncated pyramid—looked upon for centuries as the first great wonder of the world—and that together with the Great Pyramid there are also five other truncated pyramids and a “missing cornerstone” (a cube which cannot be seen by the physical sense of sight—the room of the enlightened) associated with it in that language of languages, mathematics—which when written out becomes geometry.

What seems so amazing is that apparently those mental giants of long ago were able to foresee the future to our time, today, when great changes are coming about in the civilization and the culture of the human race on this earth, your planet. Or can it be just a coincidence that what is keyed in this great wonder of all wonders should have already been discovered before the base cornerstone was examined by the discoverer and his associates?

There is a definite reason for calling those wise men of long ago *mental giants*. For example, a century ago in 1848 or 1849, would the quantity

production of automobiles by the late Henry Ford have seemed fantastic? In 1849, would the electric lamp and the “talking machine” of Thomas Edison have appeared amazing? Would the actual knowledge of Charles B. Kettering have seemed supernatural to those persons who were living a century ago?

Would Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and Charles Kettering have appeared to be *mental giants* to the people of 1849? And would it have appeared that they might have been eliminated as dangerous men during earlier centuries?

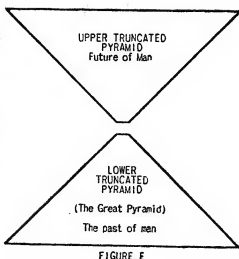
Charles B. Kettering, an outstanding American engineer and inventor, was reported to have made this statement in a talk given a few years ago at Miami University, “We keep an iron curtain down on how much we do not know, which is practically everything.”

Those mental giants of long ago apparently realized what would be the atavism of world people of this time, and so they apparently saw to it that their base cornerstone of the ancient geometrical monument would be erected, so that what was therein keyed would back up and support, like a witness with evidence in a court of law, the validity of present-day discoveries. (Atavism, according

to a Webster dictionary, means, "The influence of ancestors on their descendants; recurrence of peculiarities and-or diseases in subsequent generations.")

By and with the evidence of this ancient geometrical monument, whose cornerstone had been called for centuries by the name of the Great Pyramid, world people will be able to realize more easily that the actual genuine scientific facts which are true today, were also true thousands of years ago—which can only mean and prove that there is actual law and order throughout the universe of which this earth, your planet, is a part. Since what is now known, which is also keyed as evidence in the cornerstone of this ancient geometrical monument, covers everything in mankind's experience, it follows that professional ethics are to be observed, while representatives from all fields of human endeavor are to be treated alike. What the workers in the fields of jurisprudence, psychiatry, psychology, etc. and the workers in the fields of economics, government, the physical sciences, etc. do to understand this genuine science and correct wisdom, is up to them.

The measurements of this ancient and gigantic wonder were known for centuries before the effort was made by an Egyptian Pharaoh to construct the base cornerstone of this giant structure, which is now called the Great Pyramid. The knowledge which was keyed in this first great wonder of the world—which includes wisdom that can bring the apparent pseudo-science of man to a genuine science within the next century—was known long before the cornerstone of this ancient geometrical monument was built. As far as theory is concerned, you can take your pick as to whether there was a high civilization on this earth which was eliminated by a "del-



uge" brought about by the entry of a comet into the solar system, apparently broken up either by the "pull" of Jupiter or the inherent force of the solar system, or you can suppose theoretically that the earth was visited by individuals from another planet or space who, realizing the low stage of development and mental evolution of the human race, contributed a record or "blueprint" of measurements which when used would result in the cornerstone of a tremendous and gigantic geometrical monument which would be finally comprehended and interpreted after the human race had risen to a stage of mental evolution when such science and knowledge could be understood and then employed. Thirdly, you can theorize that there were "sports" or mutants among the inhabitants of the earth several thousands of years ago who were able to see far beyond the limited outlook of the people who were living at their time. Finally, the actual scientific facts, not theories, will be freely given before the end of this century.

Theories regarding the planners or even theories regarding the builders of this great corner-stone of the gigantic ancient geometrical monument

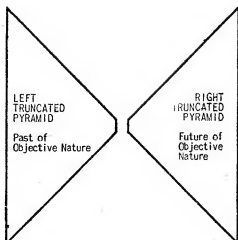


FIGURE F

are naturally held in abeyance before the comprehension and the interpretation of the science and wisdom therein keyed — and future people will appreciate in future centuries, through the history of world development, this final assistance given to man, the human race on this earth, your planet. Since it appears that from now on all will be judged in history, the reception given to this final assistance and warning will be interesting.

The common snowflake belongs to the hexagonal system, having six angles and six sides, and workers in laboratories know that when metals are dissolved to crystal like state that there are sometimes the forms of mushrooms and other flora which automatically manifest themselves, and from these as well as many other examples it can be shown that apparently there is relation to and of everything through nature.

It is already known that there is a microcosm in man, a tiny blueprint of the universe, which can make a man a "walking encyclopedia" when this "philosophers' stone" is tuned in on and used. The mental giants have shown just how to do this in their ancient geometrical monument, and

because of this the schools, colleges, and universities of the future will have a different method of instruction from that of today in teaching pupils and students how to think correctly and how to concentrate rightly, the objective of even today's schools, colleges and universities. The only "philosophers' stone" or the only "rock-of-ages" that ever existed is keyed in this ancient geometrical monument as science and wisdom which uncovers the relation of man in human society and the relation of man to and from physical forms and manifestations.

One physical form, the metronome made by man, is instructive. The metronome was used many years ago to time the rate of music for a performer who was not exact in his or her feeling. And the metronome is similar in form to the cornerstone of the ancient geometrical monument. Metronome, in philology, is made up of two Greek words meaning measure and law respectively, and the mental giants actually keyed the measurement of time, as well as the genuine laws of nature in relation to man, in their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule.

The mental giants planned their ancient geometrical monument to the "music of the spheres" in the science of mathematics, geometry while there was a great and unbelievable understanding upon their part concerning the whims and the hypocrisy of an ignorant or less developed person or human race. The mental evolution of man from the past to the present and the future has been successfully epitomized and keyed upon and in this great and now shown wonder of wonders.

The physical form of the hourglass, where sand shows the intervals of time must be known by you. It consists of two pear-shaped bulbs



of glass, united at their apices and having a minute passage formed between them. A quantity of sand (or occasionally of mercury) is enclosed in the bulbs, and then the size of the passage is so proportioned that this sand will completely run thru from one bulb to another in the time it is desired to measure, e.g. an hour or a minute. These instruments have no great pretensions for accuracy (Encyc. Brit.) while they have common use as an ordinary log-glass and sand-glass.

In their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule, the mental giants had an accurate time-measure of the events of nature—the meaning behind the six truncated pyramids of this gigantic structure, which contains man's "footprints on the sands of time."

Figure E. you have the upper and the lower truncated pyramids of the ancient geometrical monument, the lower truncated pyramid of which gigantic structure, is the Great Pyramid. The ancient geometrical monument is a gigantic cube in form and its center room or chamber has been speculated about for centuries, and is, itself, a perfect cube, a symbol of which was employed by the descendants of Abraham as the "Holy of Holies", while the Mohammedans bow five times a day toward Mecca, where there is the perfect cube, called the Kaaba. The upper and lower truncated pyramids of Figure E. have a minute passage between them, the center room or chamber of the ancient giant structure.

The lower truncated pyramid actually symbolize the *past of man*, and is what you know as the Great Pyramid, the chief cornerstone of the gigantic and ancient geometrical monument. The ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule was planned long before the chief cornerstone was erected. During the building or con-

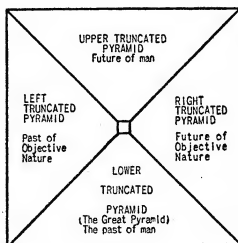


FIGURE G

struction of the cornerstone, the Great Pyramid, it was already in the past, as far as the particular model chosen by the mental giants is concerned, while today it is naturally in the past, *the past of man*.

The upper truncated pyramid in Figure E. symbolize the *future of man*, and so you can see that the past of man and the future of man are symbolized in the ancient geometrical monument. The mental giants showed the future of man from their time up to the time of our generation in the Great Pyramid. Since man has free will or choice, the future of man from

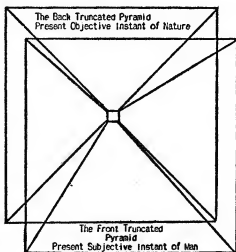


FIGURE H

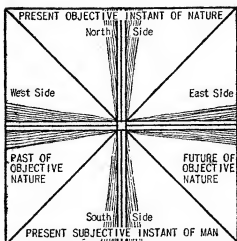


FIGURE 1

The geometrical picture of the Great Pyramid, cornerstone of the ancient Geometrical Monument, when its outer limestone casing was still intact and the sun was shining directly overhead, casting a shaft of sunlight down the center of each side, forming a cross.

The FIVE (5) of the ancient cornerstone: (1) The Great Pyramid, itself, representing the past of man to our generation, (2) The present subjective instant of man, (3) The past of the objective events of nature, (4) The present objective instant of the events of nature, (5) The future of the objective events of nature. . . (Since Man has free will or choice, the future of Man depends upon the I.Q., Intelligence quotient, and the C.Q., character quotient, of our generation.)

today on apparently depends upon the I.Q., intelligence quotient, and the C.Q., character quotient, of our generation. Perhaps your knowledge of some of today's WAR WEAPONS will point out the sanity and wisdom of the last statement.

In Figure F, there is the left truncated pyramid symbolizing the *past of the physical events of nature*, while the right truncated pyramid symbolizes the *future of the physical events of nature*.

Placing the time-measure of the two truncated pyramids from Figure F. to their proper orientation with the two truncated pyramids of Figure E., you have in Figure G. a cross of truncated pyramids, proportionately "anchored" to the "missing cornerstone"; the center room or chamber of

the enlightened.

In Figure H, there is the symbol of the present objective instant in nature in the back truncated pyramid, while the symbol of the present subjective instant of man is in the front truncated pyramid, the center room or chamber between them.

The two truncated pyramids in Figure H. fit into the back and the front of the four truncated pyramids in Figure G., thus giving the geometrical picture of the gigantic cube, the physical form of the ancient geometrical or time-capsule, whose cornerstone is the truncated pyramid, the Great Pyramid of Gizeh.

The six truncated pyramids of the ancient time-capsule or geometrical monument symbolize not only the past, the present objective instant, and the future of objective nature, itself, but also the past, the present subjective instant, and the future of man, all of which shows the interactiveness and interdependence of physical events in relation to man. The entire-ness or completeness of time in relation to man and the universe is arranged by the six truncated pyramids of the ancient time-capsule. As you know, timing is of the greatest importance not only for man but also for the individual person. Too, can an automobile easily go up a hill or an airplane fly over a high mountain, if the engine, in either case, is out of time?

The great and gigantic importance and value of the ancient geometrical monument, as well as its cornerstone, the Great Pyramid, will not be fully comprehended for some time by the people of this world — it is just too grandiose. As you can perceive, the cornerstone or Great Pyramid could be built, but the entire geometrical monument from ancient times could not be constructed in a practical and a comprehensive monument.

The mental giants did apparently

have correct wisdom and genuine scientific knowledge concerning the objective events of nature, as well as a complete comprehensive understanding of the human race. Do you finally begin vaguely to realize, even vaguely comprehend, the outstanding worth and the priceless value of the mental giants' science and wisdom?

The mental giants planned this ancient giant cube symbol long before a Paraoth, living centuries later and desiring to be known through history, would build the cornerstone of the ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule, now called the Great Pyramid.

Long before Columbus tried to find a seaway to the East by sailing westward, there were copies and replicas of the form of this ancient cornerstone which constructed in different parts of the earth or world, your planet. In fact, long before Europeans were wondering whether the earth were flat or a sphere, the cornerstone form of the ancient geometrical monument was known in various parts of the world. Actually there were persons who lived several centuries ago who were aware of the prophecies and of the great importance of this great wonder of the world, the greatest of

all wonders.

In Figure I. you have the geometrical picture of the Great Pyramid, cornerstone of the ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule, as it appeared from above at high noon when the sun was shining and its outer limestone casing was still intact. There is a resemblance to an ordinary envelope in which we mail letters today, and this cornerstone does contain a message to this generation sealed by the cross and the "missing cornerstone". This message can be included in future articles.

Both peoples and nations of our generation cannot sanely refuse genuine scientific facts and verified practical wisdom regarding man and the events of nature, especially since mental disorders and illnesses have assumed such alarming proportions thruout the world, and chaos and confusion are apparently reigning.

After you study Figure 1, do you believe that **SINCE MAN HAS FREE WILL AND CHOICE, THE FUTURE OF MAN DEPENDS UPON THE I. Q., INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT, AND THE C.Q., CHARACTER QUOTIENT, OF OUR GENERATION?**

**READ ARTICLE TWO NEXT MONTH**

### PYTHAGORAS AND CO.

**W**HETHER it was by pure chance, accident, or the results of scientific thought an analysis, some of the theories concerning the make up of the universe by Pythagoras and his followers, are astonishing in light of what has followed in modern times.

Well known to all for his works in the theory of numbers, Pythagoras also made his well-added niche in the study of astronomy. In his quest for answers to many philosophical questions, his attention turned to an understanding of the world about the Greek world. His explanation of the earth and the heavenly bodies around it was definitely esthetic. He assumed every body of the heavens was part of a musical scale. This was composed of the sun, moon and

the five planets. In a more scientific vein, Pythagoras et al noted the law and order with which the celestial sphere operated. Such things as tide, the stars and their positions were recorded and related to such things as seasons and harvest. He also toyed with the possible idea that perhaps the world revolved about the sun and not otherwise as believed.

Further astonishing evidence is shown in the genius of another Greek astronomer, Eratosthenes. Without any backlog of knowledge, refined instruments he devised the armillary sphere. With it he was able to determine the distance and measure the position of the heavenly bodies. He is perhaps most remembered for his measuring the circumference of the earth, which he believed, to be a sphere.

R. Dee



# The CLUB HOUSE

Where science fiction fan clubs get together.

Conducted by **ROG PHILLIPS**

**O**F ALL the theories on how the Earth was formed, the one that appeals to me most is the one my mother told me when I was a little child hanging onto her skirt. It goes like this;

The Earth was made in six days  
And finished on the seventh.  
According to the contract  
It should have been the 'leventh;  
But the masons, they got drunk  
And the carpenters wouldn't work,  
And so they thought the cheapest way  
Was to fill it up with dirt.

If anyone knows the author of that price less ditty I'd appreciate learning it.

When you stop to think about it, the Earth is constructed very remarkably. There's enough water so that we could have a lot more or a lot less heat from the Sun and still find it a habitable place. The water acts as a sort of temperature regulator, coupled with the air, and the properties of water and atmosphere are such that it works out perfectly.

In the study of grasses you learn that the individual molecules of a gas have quite high velocities—varying from a few hundred miles an hour to well over a thousand miles an hour for hydrogen. And in the study of astronomy you learn about escape velocity, which is the velocity an object must have to escape from the planet. For the Earth that escape velocity is over fifty thousand miles per hour. That means that it's practically impossible for even a single atom to escape from the Earth.

But on planets and moons of smaller mass the escape velocity is less. For example, on the moon nearly all molecules of atmosphere at normal temperatures would have escape velocity, and so they would leave the Moon like individual bullets. That is why the Moon doesn't have an atmosphere.

Water has a property of ionization. In whatever state it may be, whether ice, water, or steam, a very small amount of the water molecules is separated into ions—an H ion and an OH ion. In liquid water this ionization is less than one percent.

On a planet such as Mars, assuming it had a lot of water to start with, this ionization would allow a lot of the H ions to escape, leaving a lot of OH ions. These would break up into water and Oxygen, in all probability. The end result would be

the transformation of the water of Mars into Oxygen, with the escape of the Hydrogen.

If that were to take place on the Earth a time might come when it would be impossible to smoke a cigaret because it would burst into flames rather than smoulder as it normally does now. In fact, so critical is the set of conditions for the smouldering of a cigaret so it can be smoked that an increase in atmospheric pressure such as in the bore of a tunnel where they use air pressure to hold back mud and sand makes it impossible for the workers to smoke. The cigarets burn in stead of smouldering.

Other things would happen, too. For example, steel would burn at ordinary temperatures, once it got started, if there were three or four times as much Oxygen in the air. Magnesium already does that with the Oxygen content our air has.

The atmosphere of the Earth is a tremendous mass. Its balance is a remarkable thing. Plants change carbon dioxide to Oxygen, using the carbon to add to their vegetable content. Animals change the Oxygen back to carbon dioxide. And burning plants such as trees in a forest fire change Oxygen to carbon dioxide. But then a new substance comes into existence. This substance is carbon monoxide, which always appears in combustion of substances containing carbon compounds.

Carbon dioxide is inert, so far as an animal is concerned. If any animal is placed in an atmosphere of pure carbon dioxide it will die, but from asphyxiation rather than being poisoned, because the carbon dioxide simply doesn't act on an animal or human body. Not so, carbon monoxide. It is a deadly poison, and can kill when it is present in very small amounts.

Science has found that in much less than lethal amounts the human body can gradually convert it to carbon dioxide, but only very gradually.

Up until the turn of this century man's progress did not materially alter things. His wood and coal fires were small and had no detectable influence on the content of the atmosphere. Consider things now. It would be an interesting problem to take the data on gasoline and coal consumption and on how much carbon monoxide it all produces, and figure out how much carbon monoxide is actually generated each twenty-four hours, and go on from there

and calculate how many years it will be until the percentage of that poison in the atmosphere will be lethal.

The answer might be very startling. It might be found that at the present rate it may be only fifty years until that poison will make animal life impossible!

Even today we have "poison fogs" in Pennsylvania, and smog in southern California. Long before the poison reached lethal percentages there would be deadly pockets of it drifting over the Earth.

So it may be a more immediate danger than possible effects of the atom bomb. One thing is sure, however. As soon as people start dying from it there will be serious study of the problem and facts will come out.

Those facts may seriously affect our way of living. The day may come when it will be against the law to operate a gasoline motor. The millions of cars may have to go—or be scrapped in favor of storage battery carriages.

Or maybe some gadget will be added to the exhaust manifold that will cut the carbon monoxide percentage way down. We've had less than half a century of gasoline civilization, yet already we are beginning to run into problems of effects on the atmosphere. They will increase rather than remain negligible.

Some of you budding scientists might well occupy your minds with these problems and find the answers. It is said that subjects for thesis for degrees are getting scarcer and scarcer; but such problems are legitimate subjects for original research and may save humanity a lot of trouble.

Ha! Or maybe I should say, as some fan once wrote. "Oh groan!" Remember how I said Spacewarp could send in twelve entries for the contest? Art Rapp sure did. Oh groan. But, seriously, I'm glad he did. In my opinion a few more than a dozen items from Spacewarp during 1948 were worth entering for the grand contest to determine the best amateur efforts of last year in fanzine. Unique in the history, not only of fandom, but of literature, is that nine part serial, each installment by a different author; "The Great Stf Broadcast."

You know, I think it would be a wonderful idea to run some of the fan masterpieces in the CLUB HOUSE and let you readers vote on the final winners of that hundred bucks in prizes. Of course there won't be room enough to run all the entries, but there are to be twelve prizes; first prize fifty bucks, second prize twenty-five bucks, and ten one year subscriptions to Amazing stories. What do you think of the idea? Boy, oh boy! You readers will be in for some real treats. That is, if the authors of the entries don't object, and the editors of Amazing Stories don't object, and with Uncle Joe. What if all fans are tools of Capitalist Wall Street! Anyway, just to get things straight, any author of any entry that doesn't like the idea of his gem appearing in the CLUB HOUSE had better write me and tell me so. Of course, that won't bar his entry from the contest; but

but—but—I like the idea so well I'll sure be disappointed if that happens. And there are now seventeen entries. There should be a lot more coming.

If you wrote something that appeared in a fanzine in 1948 and the readers of that zine rated it tops, get after the editor of that zine to send it in.

\* \* \*

Now we come to the fanzines themselves. Down in Los Angeles—where I happen to be at the moment of this writing, having come down for a fresh cup of coffee last fall and sort of hung around all winter—are some fans who are to fandom what Superman is to mankind. Their names are Charles Burbee, F. Towner Laney, Cyrus B. Condra, William Rotsler, Sydney Edward Stibbard, and—but I've already listed Bill Rotsler. I've had the opportunity to get acquainted with them while down here in L. A., where the skies are not smoggy all day (oh yeah?), and have come to the conclusion that they are something special. Take Bill Rotsler. He is a commercial artist. I've watched him work, and his fingers move so fast and so skillfully that it's like watching a miracle.

Well, Bill Rotsler has a fanzine of his own that he publishes for F.A.P.A., the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, which is really a honey. It's called MASQUE. I keep looking at it and admiring the perfection of the thing, and wondering why fellows with such skills don't publish professionally, instead of going to all that effort and getting such perfection, only to limit circulation to seventy-five—the members of F.A.P.A..

It's front and back covers illos are drawn by Stibbard, who is a sly young blade. A couple of weeks ago I was at Laney's over in Alhambra with his gang, and Stibbard drew my picture for a fanzine we were all working on together, thinking I didn't know he was doing so, while I watched him out of the corner of my eyes, which were seemingly staring off into space while I was supposed to be deep in thought.

F. Towner Laney leads off the contents of MASQUE with "Tome Tracking With The Tiger", the Tiger being Charles Burbee, and the Tome Tracking being in the used book piles of the Goodwill Industries store.

The real treat of this issue of, MASQUE, however, is Chas. Burbee's, "A coinage for Fandom" in which he advocates that fandom issue its own special coinage and break away from U.S. coined money. The advantages, Burbee points out, are immediately obvious. Fan editors can become rich overnight, since all money will be mimeographed. In addition, he can pay more for the material he prints in his fanzine than pro publishers can, and therefore the tables will become turned. Amazing Stories, for example, will become a fanzine, while MASQUE, for example, will bury Rog Phillips' stories for ten cents a word.

And there is a liberal sprinkling of fantasy cartoons from the fantastic pen of Rotsler himself. One, entitled "Psycho-

analysis", would sell to a news syndicate in my opinion.

If you would like a copy of MASQUE, write to Rotsler and plead with him to print more copies for general circulation. If enough of you wrote I think he would do it. Enclose a dime and a three cent stamp, and I'll bet you'll get a copy of the next MASQUE, at least. The address of Bill Rotsler is Rt. 1, Box 638, Camarillo, Cal.

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SHADOWLAND; Vol. 1, No. 1; S. J. Martinez, 1830 East 15th St., Tulsa 4, Oklahoma. No price listed. No date. It has two interesting articles, "Confessions of a Fantasy Fan", and "An Open Letter to Scientification Editors". Also a three quarter page science quizz and a poem. It closes with a discussion of what entertainment of the future might be like.

A letter accompanies the copy of this zine sent in for review. The letter states, "Dear Rog; I read of your contest in the last issue of Amazing stories and so am enclosing a copy of SHADOWLAND. This is the only issue of this opus yet to appear but, from your Club House column, I take it that it will still be eligible. Therefore, as principal and practically only reader of this fanmag, I nominate "Confessions of a ST Fan" for consideration. Lots of luck in wading through all the entries. Sam."

I'm sorry, Sam, but your entry presents all the features of the ONE type of entry I said I would be justified in refusing, and for very good reasons. It is not dated, and it must have appeared in 1943. You admit you are practically the only reader, and say nothing about other readers writing in and voting that article the best in the issue. Moreover, it is practically the only article in the issue, and everything in the issue was written and published by yourself. If I were to accept your entry I would in all fairness have to accept as an entry everything printed in all fanzines during 1943.

However, best of luck on your publishing venture. I hope you get lots of readers and can continue publishing your fanzine during 1949 so that next year you can submit an entry to the next contest.

\*\*\*

FANTASY-TIMES; twice a month, 10 cents, 12-\$1.00; James V. Taurasi, 137-03 Thirty-second Ave, Flushing, N.Y.. The February number has eight pages and a cover illustration by TOK, with a short sketch of TOK by Lane Stannard—word sketch, that is. TOK is Herman Von Tokken, a personal friend of Taurasi's.

Arthur Jean Cox reports on the Mexican Stf Magazine that is using direct translations of already published and copyrighted stf stories, and direct reproductions of copyrighted illustrations and covers from magazines published in the United States without bothering to ask for, let alone pay for them. (Ha! It seems that some translator even went to the trouble of changing one of MY stories over into Mexican for that magazine, Los Cuentos Fantásticos!) I heard about Los Cuentos Fantásticos some time ago and went down on

Main Avenue here in Los Angeles just up from the railroad depot where there are a few stands selling purely Mexican magazines, which all seem to be direct steals of U.S. magazines—or maybe Mexican subsidiaries, or maybe all of them except Los Cuentos Fantásticos BUY permission to translate—I didn't inquire of the Mexican merchants. I bought a copy of Los Cuentos Fantásticos for twenty cents American money. It is well put out, though not containing twenty cents worth of material.

Anyway, I got to thinking. If its publishers had written me and asked permission to translate a story of mine for free, I would have granted it. It would be refreshing, to say the least, to have a few thousand Mexicans become stfans. And I doubt if the market for science fiction south of the border is great enough to enable the publishers of that magazine to break even on the printing bill, let alone pay for the material they use. So, to further the Cause of imaginative literature I hereby give my permission to the publishers of Los Cuentos Fantásticos to publish spanish translations of any of my stories they see fit, insofar as I have any legal rights to do so, provided they have at least the courtesy to send me a free copy of each issue containing one of my stories. Of course, this does not sign away the rights of publishers who have bought my stories to collect damages if they find they can, and decide to do so.

I really think those Mexican boys should have been a little more—ah—courteous, though. I think if they had written the legal owners of the material they expropriated for use in Mexico and said, "See here, my fran, I weesh to pobleesh a periodico. Si? Eet weel not pay me so much monee. Een fack, I weel lose monee. No? BOT—eet weel excite the senyours so they no take their afternoon siesta. No? How abot it. Huh?" they could have gotten permission to use the stuff. No?

Ray Van Houten in his feature, "World of Tomorrow Today", reports on the new atomic clock, so accurate it will take three million years for it to gain or lose a second. That is really saying something. Of course, it is predicated on the assumption that its second is absolutely correct. If its second is a little off it will gain or lose time at a regular rate. That is just splitting hairs, though. The real value of that clock, and I suppose most of you read about it in the daily papers, is that it will enable us to have absolutely constant measure of time independent of the stars. That may be very important in the near future, and may bring out startling new facts about astronomy. Heretofore we have used the light from some distant star, on the assumption that it came to us in a straight line. We may find now that such is not the case.

Reports on Fantasy Clubs in F-T are always up to date and form a very important service to F-T subscribers. There are many other features that appear regularly in F-T, making it perhaps the most comprehensive coverage of things of interest to

fans that there is in fandom.

For example, you fans living in the west don't see all the prozines on the newstands that appear in the east. You can learn of them in F.T. and learn where to send for them if you want them. Send Taurasi a buck for F-T. I guarantee you won't regret it. **ROCKET NEWS LETTER**; journal of the Chicago Rocket Society; 16 cents, or you may obtain a free copy if you haven't already, to see what it is like. Vincent Story, 5747 University Ave., Chicago. Meetings of the Society are held at Roosevelt College in Chicago once a month.

The November and December copies are on hand for review. A little late due to my mail difficulties while I'm down here in Los Angeles. In the November issue are a few pages of Rocketry Abstract—paragraphs of brief mention of items of interest. Then comes a very interesting discussion of "The Speed of Light and Space Ship Navigation." Wayne Proell, who wrote it, did a wonderful job on it.

The December issue has more Rocketry Abstracts, and an article on "The Meson," by Norman J. Bowman. It, too, is well written and carefully thought out. Those Chicago Rocket boys know their stuff.

**DAWN**; The Fanzine From Kentucky, 10 cents. 3-25 cents; Lester Fried, 2050 Midland Ave., Louisville, Kentucky. February issue of this letterzine successor to Fandom Speaks. Twenty pages of regalelength! It is to be published every other month, the February issue being the second to appear.

Gwen Cunningham, 8519 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, Cal., leads off with a long letter discussing race problems from a stiff standpoint, if such is possible. Then follows Rus Woodman of 505 Washington Ave., Portland, Maine, with the assertion that the female of the species is more bloodthirsty and cold blooded than the male.

Then comes R. G. White, 36 Fifth St., Woodlawn Beach, Buffalo 19, N. Y., who, God bless him, saw the announcement of **DAWN** in this department of Amazing Stories and sent for it. White gets much, much closer to proper subject matter for a good letterzine. He discusses non-Aristotelian logic as expounded by Alfred Korzybski and fictionalized by van Vogt, in his nult-A stories.

Well, whatta ya know—the next letter in **DAWN** is by Francis T. Laney, in whose home I breakfasted at two A.M. some weeks ago after an all night fanzine session. Fran makes a good point when he says racial problems have already been overdone in past fan controversy, and will only bore the average fan. And I agree with him when he says that only controversial subjects can give life to a letterzine. Next letter is by Rick Sneary of South Gate California, whose acquaintance I have also made while down here in L.A. He protests the long size of **DAWN** because it makes it hard to file. A good objection, but since Fandom Speaks, the last letterzine, was also long size, it makes it nice to have the new letterzine the same length.

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Ed Cox, John E. Blyler, Jack Perley, Len Moffatt, Evan Appleman, Cliff Nichols, J. T. Oliver, Paul Cox; Those are the others whose letters appear in DAWN no. 2. A fanzine review section by Ed Cox and a fantasy by Ray Rebel complete the issue. What a steal for only a dime!

FLUB; 5 cents, 50 cents per year.; Wallace Shore, P. O. Box 1565, Billings, Montana. Two issues on hand for review. In fact, it might be better to review all of Wallace Shore's stuff in one bunch. Besides the two Flubs, there is vol. 1, no. 3 of the AMTORIAN, his Burroughs fanzine. Also there is his joint project with Coswal to form a new amateur press association. Coswal's address is Box 6, Helena, Montana. He is an old established fan, whereas Wally is a newcomer with lots of ambition and time to devote to being an actfan.

This new APA is called Galactic Amateur Press Association, or GAPA. Wally and Coswal have some new ideas on the subject of an APA. As many of you know, the only successful APA to date is FAPA, of which I myself am a member. FAPA is limited to sixty-five members, and membership is continued through payment of dues and eight pages of activity per year. The dues in FAPA are a dollar a year. Those eight pages minimum of activity amount to a few more dollars, naturally, since they are multiplied by sixty-five when the member goes to mimeograph them.

GAPA is going to try a more ambitious scheme. Dues will be a buck and a half for active members, and three bucks for members who don't do their own publishing. Membership would be limited to two hundred. Activity requirements would be six pages of your own material, or twelve of other members material in your own publication. The mailings would be monthly, instead of quarterly as in FAPA. The constitution would be patterned after FAPA'S, which is sensible, as the FAPA constitution is the product of years of hard knocks and experience.

Now, as Coswal says, GAPA is at present just a dream. It can't become a reality unless enough fans want to go into it and get it started. It is an ambitious scheme.

What I'd suggest you interested fans do is send Wally maybe a quarter for a subscription to FLUB and the AMTORIAN and a note asking for more details on GAPA. You can't lose, as Wally seems to be full of energy and ambition, and is already publishing FLUB which is a regular fanzine on a par with the others, and maybe a new and successful APA can be born out of all this. WONDER; Michael Tealby, 8 Burfield Ave. Loughborough, Leics, England. A letter accompanies it which is reproduced here:

\*\*\*

Dear Mr. Phillips;

Herewith a copy of 1st issue of my fanzine. This will be published three times a year. It is to be distributed mainly through the Science Fantasy Society, but if any of you over there would like copies the subs

is as follows; U.S.A. readers, six issues for 25 cents or ANY PROZINE ACCEPTED AS PAYMENT FOR SIX ISSUES. Enjoy the CLUB HOUSE very much, and should like to finish by just saying thanks for that wonderful story (shall I ever forget it) So Shall Ye Reap.

Sincerely,  
Michael Tealby

There you are, guys and gals. Send Mike a copy of Amazing Stories, or any other prozine you have laying around 'hat you can spare, but be fair to him; be sure it is in good condition. It is more valuable to him than the quarter, because, you see, American magazines can't be sold in England, or even obtained, unless some friend over here sends it direct.

The copy sent for review contains two short stories, "Girl of the Green Crystal" by Peter L. Russell, and "A Point of View," by Derek Nable; a discussion forum by Ken Slater, and a poem, "First Flight," by Raymond Bailey. It is such a wonderful poem that I hope its author won't mind my reproducing it here at the close of this month's CLUB HOUSE.

\*\*\*

#### FIRST FLIGHT

by Raymond F. Bailey

The crowds were tense with bated  
breath.

They watched the rocket warm its jets;  
First red, then yellow, glaring white,  
The awful blast drove out the night.

The great ship shuddered, quivered,  
rose  
Like some black giant on brilliant toes.  
Slowly at first, then faster she sped.  
'Till nought but a star winked overhead.

And soon the star itself was gone,  
As out of the east crept up the Sun.  
The crowd now stirred, and turning as  
one,  
Headed for a distant dome.

No cheer was voiced. No word was  
spoken.  
Never once was the silence broken.  
No excited chatter broke the air.  
No sweetheart sighed for her man up  
there.

For no man on Earth's first space  
flight sped.  
'Twas millions of years since the last  
man died.  
No man was there to lead the chants.  
The crowd and crew, you see, were  
ants.

\*\*\*

Which makes me think--do you know why insects can never become intelligent? There is a definite reason, otherwise they would have become intelligent before any animal did, and would now be the civilized



aces of Earth. The reason is that their throat is right inside their brain, and when, through mutation, their brain enlarges, it constricts their throat so they can't eat solid food. They then must become leeches, and the life of a leech is stationary and not conducive to mental development. Thus, nature has automatically prevented insects from becoming intelligent by a simple anatomical defect.

—ROG PHILLIPS

## THE DEAD WORLD

By D. Wroble

WITH THE latest advances in astronomical equipment many of the doubtful theories concerning the heavens will be dispelled. Perhaps, even more of the characteristics of the Moon may be determined. However, the work of astronomers has given us a pretty accurate picture of the lunar world, sometimes called the dead world.

How then did they arrive at the name of dead. Primary was the consideration of the lunar weather, or rather, the absence of it. When viewed through our telescopes the lunar disc presents a clear and practically unobstructed picture. The craters, and corresponding "seas" are seen in unmistakable detail. This lack of hazy envelope leads us to believe that the moon is devoid of any atmosphere. Further investigation would show that because of this lack of atmosphere, we would not encounter any weather as we know it on earth. There would be no wind, and no storms. The lack of atmosphere would put any one making an on the spot survey of the moon at the mercy of the many meteors. As we know on earth, most of the meteor which strikes our planet is consumed in its passage through our atmosphere, and only a slight fraction of the residue is assumed to reach us.

The explanation given for this lack of atmosphere and the elements is perhaps due to conditions of long ago. It is believed that the moon did, at one time have an envelope of atmosphere but because the lunar planet is such that it has a pull of gravity only a fraction of that of the earth, the atmosphere was gradually lost because of lack of power to hold it to the body.

Another reason for the lack of vegetation, together with the lack of air, is the extreme deviation in temperature. The unprotected surface of the moon is subject to temperatures of 170 degrees Fahrenheit at noon and 260 degrees at sunset. The complete day-night cycle takes approximately one month and just about nullifies any attempt to adapt to the temperature changes. Plainly and theoretically, it is truly a dead world.

THE END

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# THE WORLD IS DEAD

(Continued From Page 125)

HE TALKED too much. Telepathy! I let my mind go blank. I simply acted. There was an odd look of surprise on his face before I wiped it out with my fist. I might as well have given a signal. In an instant the cabin was alive with fighting figures. We were outnumbered, but numbers sometimes mean nothing. We were fighting with the desperation of the doomed. The quarters were large and the fight raged the length and breadth of the cabin. I shouted instructions for my men. I wanted those dis-guns.

One of the guards who had taken one of them, stood near Fraga. He was fiddling with the mechanism. Either he didn't realize or was too immersed in the gun, to watch Fraga. But before he had any idea of her nearness it was too late to do anything about. She had concealed a knife in the bodice of her loose-fitting dress. And with a lithe movement, she slipped it free and gave it to him for its entire length. He squealed a little as the knife went in. And I was right there to help ease him to the floor.

Then the dis-gun was in my hand and its hissing murmur of death was a nightmare in the ears of those Earthmen who heard it. It didn't take long. The fight was over. My men disarmed the rest. I was in complete control. But of what?

"How long do you think you can hold out?" Smith asked.

This time it was Fraga who had the answer:

"You wanted to destroy our plan-

et," she said. "Instead, we will destroy yours. Commander Hodas can set the instruments for the Earth. You said men are bringing space suits for us. Good! We will all wear them, you, Vomat, and the rest of us. Does that suit you?"

A shrug of his shoulders was all the answer she got, and a blank look from the Earthman. But I was already at the lever. The charts were all set. It took me only long enough to decipher their meaning, before I knew how to go about it. In the meantime, the men had brought the suits. They too were lined up with the rest. There was but one thing which bothered me. Where were the ports of escape?"

Smith only smiled when I asked that.

"All right men," I said. "I know you can understand me. Which one of you knows where the space...."

"Don't waste your time," Smith said. "These are deaf mutes. So now what?"

"Give me that knife," I said to Fraga.

Smith turned pale as I stepped to his side. I grabbed his wrist before he could pull it away, and shoved his hand out. The knife went down swiftly and his index finger fell to the floor.

"One by one," I said, holding the knife close to the other fingers, "until there are no more. Then the wrist. I swear there won't be a bit left to you."

"Wait!" he begged gaspingly. "You wouldn't...."

The second finger went the way of the first. He screamed with pain and

fear. I twisted his hand and held the knife against the next finger,

"Talk," I said, "Be quick!"

"Yes, Yes! I'll talk. They are...."

I LOOKED toward the spot where the Earth ship had been. But the silver sphere was no longer there. It and its terror-laden package was already far on its way back to the place from where it had come. I had been ruthless. Not a single man was allowed to be left alive. The dis-guns had killed them all. Yes, even two of the men I had brought along had had to sacrifice. There just weren't enough space suits for all.

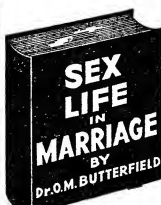
We floated free. Somewhere below, a great battle was taking place. Bordas-Ba had taken the offensive. We could see the flashes of bombs falling, and now and then one or another of the great dreadnaughts would explode in a great burst of orange flame. But Fraga and I didn't care. We were together. And soon, somewhere on that planet below, there would be haven.

It took us the whole of the night to fall to earth. The sun was full in our faces as we landed with gentle force in the midst of a vineyard. It took but a little while and I and the last of my men got to Vomat and the Earthman, Smith. They came meekly. By that time the vintner and a couple of his men came to see who these strange creatures were who had fallen from the sky. The sight of out dis-guns convinced them neutrality was the best course.

What was more, he had a space-ship for me. I left my companion there. He stood guard over the prisoners. Fraga and I had a rendezvous with her father and the rest.

The battle was over. It had been

(Concluded On Page 142)



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## HAVE YOU A MASCOT?

by MILDRED MURDOCH

**D**O YOU carry a lucky coin? Or perhaps wear a charm? Do you refrain from starting anything on Friday, or shudder when a black cat crosses your path? Then you have lots of company, for countless people, even though they may laugh at such things, do observe many superstitions, and seem to have an inborn faith in the value of mascots of various kinds. It can be a matter of conjecture only, how widespread is the dependence on such beliefs, and how much value is placed on the possession of charms, and the power of amulets. But consider your own circle of friends and acquaintances, how few people you know who actually ignore all aspects of the mascot tradition.

A mascot, according to the dictionary, is "a person, animal or object supposed to bring good luck". When speaking of mascots, therefore, we can include all sorts of charms, amulets, talismans and lucky pieces. In much the same category we can place the significance attached by many people to certain colors, numbers and days as being lucky or unlucky for them, as well as the acts considered to be "bad luck" if not counteracted by a "lucky" charm.

Some of the common superstitions today concern the number thirteen, Friday, stepping on a crack, killing a spider, eating the last piece of food on a plate, counting the cars in a funeral procession, walking under a ladder, opening an umbrella indoors, breaking a mirror, hearing a dog howl, knocking on wood. How many more can you name?

Common mascots carried in pocket or purse are coins, biffs, medals, dice, small figures of all kind which have some mean-

ing to the owner, a rabbit's foot, a four-leaved clover. Jewels of various kinds are highly regarded by some of us as being lucky, although certain stones are considered unlucky. A woman will wear a certain bracelet when she especially wants fortune to smile on her; an actor wouldn't think of omitting to wear a certain pair of cuff links when his new play opens. They may scoff at the idea of believing such things will bring them luck, but their actions contradict their words.

Soldiers carry amulets into battle to protect themselves from evil; the aviator has his talisman somewhere about his plane; the businessman has a mascot on his desk, a paper weight or letter opener that he likes to have handy. Gamblers, perhaps depending for their livelihood upon luck, place the greatest dependence on luck bringers. Football teams have their mascot, maybe a small dog, or it might be the young brother of one of the players. And what about the spectators at an athletic contest, who wear the colors of their favorite team, hoping to bring victory? The engagement ring in another mascot, and the bride's traditional bouquet of white. The mascot is everywhere, although often used unconsciously as such, with no deliberate attempt to bring luck or repel evil.

Mascots have been used since earliest times. Mythology and legend are full of evidences of men's dependence on the mascot, and early religions made great use of the talisman and amulet as an aid to giving the people understanding of what was being taught them, and linking their personal strivings with the vast forces of the unknown.

The cross, in various forms, has been a venerated emblem for countless centuries. The swastika, in recent times made notorious by the Nazis, is perhaps the oldest talisman in the world, having been found all over the world in prehistoric remains. Long before the Christian era, the cross was used. When the Spaniards came to Mexico they discovered with amazement that the cross was the most sacred symbol of the Indians there, a people who had never heard of Christianity.

One of the most ancient talismans ever used is the bell. The belief that bells are feared by the powers of evil has had world-wide recognition from the earliest times. At first bells were purely religious symbols, then later were worn as personal charms, until finally the reasons for their use have become forgotten, although the use of bells continues.

The amethyst was called the "beneficent stone" by ancient peoples, and has been used as a mascot for many ages. It was supposed to calm fear, cure diseases, especially nervous troubles, and was worn by ancient Greeks and Egyptians as a talisman against drunkenness. There is an old legend accounting for the power of the stone in this respect. A beautiful nymph named Amethyst attracted the interest of the god Bacchus during one of his drunken revels. He pursued her, and she prayed for

help from Diana, goddess of chastity. Diana heard the prayer of Amethyst, and changed the maiden into a shining jewel just as Bacchus seized her. Sobered and shamed by the surprise, Bacchus endowed the stone with the rich purple hue of his favorite drink, and decreed that henceforth the amethyst should have power to weaken his hold over those who worshipped him, and to save them from the degradation to which otherwise he would drag them. Being thought to induce tranquility and calmness, the amethyst has been used extensively for rings of bishops, and for rosaries.

Beans have often been used as charms, to drive off evil influences, protect children, and promote happiness. Old Egyptian tombs often contained beans as the emblem of immortality, since they retain the spark of life almost indefinitely.

Innumerable other objects have had special significance for people throughout the ages, and the tradition of using these objects as charms or mascots still endures, even though the original reasons and meanings have been long forgotten.

There are certain rules concerning the use of mascots which have come down from ancient times. Any mascot purchased for that purpose, or come by wrongly, is more apt to bring bad luck than good. The most beneficial mascot is the gift of a friend, a concrete evidence of kindly thoughts or loving prayers a reward for some good act, or a token of gratitude. Any object seen in this light acquires beauty and dignity, worthy to be used as a bringer of good fortune. A mascot is powerless, if its possessor is unworthy of it. Ancient rules concerning such objects say they should never touch the ground, and are more potent if worn on the left side.

The belief that mascots have great powers has its basis in man's universal acceptance of the existence of ever-warring forces of good and evil, light and darkness. Throughout the ages, in all man's reaching for religion his grasping into the unknown, is the constantly recurring idea of two great unseen powers battling about him, the good and the bad. Originally all mascots had an acknowledged religious significance, which was the hope that they would attract beneficial spiritual aid to their users, and likewise combat evil influences. The mascots had no powers of their own; their purpose was to identify the user as desiring aid, to attract the influence of the unseen forces surrounding mankind.

That belief is undoubtedly back of the modern widespread use of mascots of all kinds, and the various superstitions concerning what is, or is not, "lucky". A lucky coin carried in a man's pocket is an outward sign of that one individual's struggle for good against evil. The universal use of mascots is just another aid, something to "hang on to", in mankind's perpetual warfare to subdue evil, and forward the good.

THE END

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## SKY FREAKS

By  
Stanislaus Smith

**A** MEAGER investigation into the whys and wherefores of the skies above us will show that all is not smooth in running. Among the old stars and planets there are some that are dubbed freaks, or scientifically variable.

The primary reason these stars are called variable is that they vary in intensity. A look at the constellation Cetus the Whale will show the first of these. This is the star, Mira. It was first discovered in 1596 by a Dutch astronomer, Fabricius. This phenomenon, then probably at its brightest, was seen with the naked eye. Nothing spectacular was attributed to it at the time. Half a century later Bayer rediscovered Mira and started an intense study of these sky variables. Because it was unheard of for a star to behave as it did Mira was called the Wonderful. It was found that Mira oscillated in intensity a range of normal to 100 times its brightness.

Another class of the "sky freaks" is the novae, or new stars. Foremost of these is Tycho's Star. Named after Tycho Brahe, who discovered it, it was famous because its brightness rivalled that of Venus and could be seen during the height of day. However, as quickly as it came into prominence, it died away until today it is not to be found.

Little known to the layman are the variables known as black stars. These may be said to be those which have not yet learned to thoroughly penetrate the heavens. Their reflection can be determined by infra-red photography.

Several suggested explanations have been forwarded to give the reason for the behavior of the sky freaks, but as yet are only probably and not positive proof.

THE END

## THE WORLD IS DEAD

(Concluded)

short. Vomat's forces had lost the battle almost before it started. The foot men and armored columns had been mired in the marshes of Zung. But the women of Hin had died to the last. Hung-Hu was no longer a battleground. We had won.

Bordas-Ba, himself made Fraga my wife.

Of course Smith and Vomat paid for their lives.

And somewhere in space a world died, because of a man's greed.

## EXPANDING UNIVERSE

By  
Peter Millikan

WITH the advent of the theory of relativity many of the concepts regarding the physical world had to be revised. As would be expected Astronomy was one such study. Einstein not only led to a possible better explanation of the past of the universe but also its future. As a result many new problems were presented to science.

One of these problems was forwarded by Abbe' Lemaitre, a Belgian mathematician. Einstein had provided the core of this theory of an expanding universe. Briefly, it is believed that the universe was in the beginning a small sphere and since that time has been growing since. One of the phenomenon which seem to substantiate this study is the apparent recession of the galaxies. The greater the distance the galaxy appears from us the greater its apparent speed. It is believed that because of this theory and its implications that the universe doubles its size in little over 1 billion years. This some say is cause for attention to the galaxies lest they slip beyond the range of our present equipment. However, due to latest developments astronomers are less certain that the recession of the galaxies is real.

Other difficulties encountered by the expanding universe theory have also cast some doubt on it. According to all mathematical concepts it is believed that the universe began approximately 100 billion years ago while the stars, according to some, are much older than that figure. Secondly, the speed of the receding galaxies poses a contradiction to the Einsteinian theory, namely, the greatest speed to be attained is that of light. Perhaps, with a further investigation of the *celestial* by our latest powerful telescopes, this dilemma will be settled.

## MOURNING CUSTOMS

By Lester Fletcher

IT IS surprising, to note that man, though native and primitive in his many everyday events, take such interest in the welfare of their departed members. Most of the extensive ceremony connected with mourning a deceased tribe member takes place in the African Congo and Asia.

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In order to protect the dead from anything unfriendly the natives prepare the body by drying and smoking so as to save it from any further changes. Many times the remains are put in an effigy and for months after the remains enjoy the same privileges and the living members of the tribe and are present at all tribal functions. So that his future life may be assured gifts of staples, trinkets, cloths are presented at the bier and later buried with the deceased. Many tribes relate the degree of honor of their dead by placing and burying them on scaffolds. The higher the scaffold was placed the more he was held in esteem.

Some tribes beseech their dead to help them in times of need in strict ritual. The Nsambe exhume the skull of their dead and place it with the others of their tribe who have departed. When poor crops, sickness or other misfortune strikes the skulls are taken out and paraded about the village in the hope that they will help to overcome the trouble and restore the happiness of the people.

## STEP BY STEP

By Charles Recour

NOW SCIENTIFIC techniques strongly remind one of the general development of any new idea. In the beginning things are experimented with on a trial-and-error basis, and then gradually they are put on a firmer basis, until finally a definite, law hedged science results.

An excellent example of this in our times, is airplane design. First the crude experimental principles of flight were learned by cut and try methods. Now everything is done on paper and with calculations before a single sheet of metal is handled. The same is true of one of the branches of technology that is becoming increasingly important. This is vacuum practice. When the art of pumping air out of tubes was started on a fairly large scale back in the eighteen eighties, it was strictly a mechanics problem. Eventually a great deal was learned about it. As time went on and the x-ray tube, and the radio tube came into prominence, high vacuum practice became a fine art. The second World War called for this knowledge on a grand scale in the atom bomb work and in electronics.

The result is that a famous scientist has finally summarized all high vacuum practice in an encyclopedic work called the "Scientific Foundations of High Vacuum Technique." Dr. Saul Dushman of the General Electric Company has finally put it all into one vast book, now the bible of the research worker. Now you can pump the air out of things by the numbers!

THE END



# RELAY RACE

By  
John Madson

**G**REAT INVENTIONS often hinge on little ideas. Sometimes the most important industrial developments depend on relatively trivial little gadgets. One of these much neglected and rarely considered ingenious inventions is the modern relay.

You don't hear a lot about it but it is everywhere—in your home, in your car, in one form or another in practically all the electrical equipment you use or come in contact with.

A relay is nothing more than a combination of two very simple things—an electromagnet and a switch. As everyone knows, it takes only a very little amount of electrical current to make a quite powerful magnet if this current is passed through a coil of copper wire of many turns wrapped around an iron core. Then, even a few thousandths of an ampere of current will give a surprisingly powerful magnetic pull. In a relay, this pull is used to operate a switch. That's all there is to it. But imagine the possibilities. For one thing, the use of a relay means that you can control current and electrical circuits which are distant from you. Flip a small switch or press a button and a huge motor will spring into action.

The telegraph is a communications application of the relay. Mod-telephone switching depends on the use of thousands of relays. The relay has countless uses and more and more are being found for it each day. Relays find their greatest use in connection with automatic devices like photo-electric cells and thermostats.

The conventional mechanical relay described above is already being partially displaced with the electronic relay which is nothing more or less than a gas-filled tube, very similar to a high vacuum triode tube. When a slight voltage variation is applied to the grid of the thyatron as the relay tube is called, it triggers and allows a large current to flow through it. A reversal of the grid voltage and it cuts off the current through the tube—just like a switch!

The race now is to apply the relay to more and more machines. As mechanization goes, and as automatization increases, relays by the millions will be used. A relay can close a switch a lot faster, a lot more accurately, a lot more sharply, than can a human hand. My God! Is there nothing that can't be done better by machine than by human activity? Maybe the famous Wiener's prediction that there isn't such a thing, may come true after all!

THE END

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## RADAR NETWORK

By I. Kahn

THE NEWSPAPERS have been alive with the Congressional proposal to blanket the United States with a coverage of radar stations. These stations would be built all around the continental United States, the object of their design and construction being to provide adequate warning against any surprise attack by aircraft or guided missiles.

Such a project is commendable—and necessary. Naturally it is impossible to provide complete coverage—that is, every foot of our borders cannot be so guarded. The expense would be too great—but with the cooperation of Canada it is possible to set up a reasonably good protective network. Basically such a system would consist of a number of long range advance warning radars capable of detecting rockets or bombers and distances of several hundred miles. By the time such craft were detected fighters and interceptor rockets based behind the radars would have a chance to get into the air and wreak their share of damage on the incoming attackers.

In the remote fastnesses of the Arctic regions a tight chain of shorter range stations would be assembled. This net would be completely automatic in operation. Upon the detection of unauthorized flying objects, interceptor rockets would flash into the air bringing down their quarry.

The whole scheme is fundamentally sound. On a lesser scale it has been seen how effective the British radar network was during the Second World War.

The Germans too, had a powerful system at the time they underwent our terrific bombings. But the new radar warning system must be expected to cope with, not slow bombers, but super-fast jets and rockets.

Hence any system must be designed to give adequate time for the defence to get ready. This is the nub of the matter. It is hard to do. However each day radar systems are being improved. Eventually we can expect to receive a satisfactory defense system. It is expected that a certain percentage of attackers will be bound to break through any defense system we have, no matter how well designed; the resulting losses to us can be expected. Scientific methods of analysis have been devised to calculate the expected damage and the whole radar system is simply designed to keep this expectation within tolerable reason.

Radar has proved its worth before; in the event that it is called upon again, it will repeat that performance with startling efficiency, of that you may be sure.

THE END

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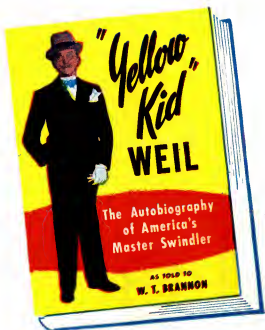
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